

The Drillmaster of Methodism

C. L. GOODELL



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The Drillmaster of Methodism

PRINCIPLES AND METHODS FOR THE
CLASS LEADER AND PASTOR

BY

Charles L. Goodell

PASTOR OF HANSON PLACE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

"Every army wheels to victory or defeat around the Drill
Sergeant"—Bishop Fowler



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To

the Memory of
the Hon. JOHN FRENCH, a Class Leader for fifty years,
and to
the Memory of my Father,
the Rev. WARREN GOODELL, a Class Leader for sixty years,
at whose requests these chapters were written,

I Dedicate

the book which they did not live to see completed,
but whose principles they exemplified.

PREFACE

ONE hundred and forty-two years ago the question was asked in open Conference, John Wesley in the chair, "Can nothing be done to make the meetings of the classes more lively and profitable?" From this it will be seen that the questions concerning class meeting which interest us to-day are by no means new questions.

The class meeting, like the Church itself, has had its revival and declension; but in spite of all efforts to abolish it or to provide for it a substitute it still holds its place, second to none, as a means of grace in the development of a noble Christian character. The recent revival of interest in the class meeting throughout the country proves that Methodism is convinced that it must foster and sustain it.

Some two years ago the writer was requested to present a paper on the class meeting before the Brooklyn Preachers' Meeting. The interest of the meeting was so great that a vote was passed arranging for a class meeting convention to be held in the Hanson Place Methodist Church. This convention was presided over by Bishop Andrews,

and addressed by Rev. J. M. Buckley, D.D., Rev. S. F. Upham, D.D., and many other prominent members of the New York East Conference. A permanent organization was formed, of which Hon. John French was made president. The writer was also invited to address the Preachers' Meeting of New York city on the same theme. The Preachers' Meeting appointed a committee to arrange for the holding of a class meeting convention in New York. This meeting was held in Calvary Church, and was addressed by Bishop Andrews, Dr. Upham, Dr. Eckman, Dr. Odell, and others. Under the direction of Dr. Millard, the presiding elder, a permanent organization of the class leaders of New York was effected. This organization immediately began effective work, holding quarterly meetings throughout the city. From these organizations has come the Lay Workers' Institute, which is doing at present an excellent work in the training of class leaders, local preachers, and Sunday school teachers by regular meetings and lectures in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Jersey City. When these conventions were reported through the papers, requests came from all parts of the country for information concerning this new movement, and the increasing demand for suggestions and encouragement to pastors and leaders in the prosecution of this work led to the writing of this book.

Little has been published on the class meeting by our Book Concern for the last twenty-five years, and this book will therefore cover a field which is not touched by any recent publication.

So much fault has been found with class leaders that it seemed to me that a chapter on the noble men of recent years who have magnified and glorified their office would be intensely interesting and profitable. I have, therefore, secured from some of our bishops and pastors of wide experience sketches of famous leaders. The names of the contributors will appear in connection with these sketches, but I wish here to express my grateful thanks for these brief memorials, which make all Methodism debtors to those who have supplied them. Our class meeting literature is so meager that I have found little here that was available. I wish, however, to mention *The Class Meeting: a Series of Prize Essays*, and *The Class Leader*, by John Atkinson. I am indebted for letters or valuable suggestions to Bishops Andrews, Fowler, Vincent, Mallalieu, and Foss, and also to Drs. Banks, Buckley, Cadman, Upham, Hurlbut, Odell, Curn, and Willey, and the officers of the Lay Workers' Institute. I wish also to acknowledge editorial courtesies from *The Christian Advocate*, *Zion's Herald*, *The Northern Christian Advocate*, and *The Epworth Herald*.

I know the faithful pastors of Methodism are

praying in their hearts for that spiritual training and development in the Church for which the class meeting stands. I have put down the results of my own experience and that of others, hoping that the spirit and method here set forth may be to them a help in the great work committed to their charge. Those who have sent communications accept full responsibility for their own utterances.

My heart goes out to that noble, intelligent, spiritual, self-denying class of men, the subpastors of Methodism, men of whom Asbury said, "The class leaders have been as helpful as the pastors in the growth of our Church." We are enjoying our great heritage without sufficient gratitude to those who scattered and nurtured the seed.

"There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man." It is to this man that I call the attention of the Church.

With the prayer that God may bless this book to the encouragement of pastors, class leaders, and members, and make it helpful in increasing the attendance and deepening the intellectual and spiritual life of the Church, I send it forth.

Hanson Place Parsonage, C. L. G.

Brooklyn, N. Y., September 1, 1902.

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The Drillmaster of Methodism

I

THE DRILL

THE class meeting is not a fetich to be worshipped without reason. It is not an institution to be preserved simply because of an honorable past. It must hold its place, if at all, because it proves itself to be at the present time a necessity of our Church life. While in many places the class is doing as effective work as ever, it is true that in some it has fallen into disuse. In many places it is moribund, and something ought to be done either to resurrect it to its old-time usefulness or to give it decent burial. A frank discussion of the situation by preachers and laymen cannot fail to do good.

That the class meeting was once a mighty power no one can deny. It proved itself the most effectual instrument of spiritual propagandism the world ever saw. It met, as nothing since ever has, the demand of the Christian life for fellowship, instruction, and spiritual nourishment. Wesley said: "It can hardly be conceived what advantages have been reaped by them." Coke and Asbury affirmed of the leaders and classes: "The revival of the work of God does perhaps depend as much

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upon the whole body of leaders as it does upon the whole body of preachers. Our leaders under God are the sinews of our society, and our revivals will ever in great measure rise or fall with them. In short, we can truly say that, through the grace of God, our classes form the pillars of our work."

The design of the class as originally constituted and for a long time continued was threefold:

1. Financial. For many years the offerings for the church and the poor were collected through the classes. The people came together, talked of holy things, gave testimony to the indwelling Christ, and before they parted made their offering to the Lord. So did paying and praying go together, and the cardinal principles of our Church were exemplified—"justification, sanctification, and a penny a week." Our prayers and alms came up for a memorial before God and he blessed us.

2. Disciplinary. For organization and discipline the class is the head and origin of the Church. Our Discipline makes it obligatory that our church membership should be divided into classes and every individual member a member of some class. If a church does not have a class it is not a Methodist church in any true sense. No person can become a member of our church unless recommended by the leaders and stewards' meeting, or, when there is no such meeting, by the leader. It is the gate through which everyone must enter our

fold, and the leader is the warden who must vouch through personal knowledge for the newcomer. It is the class leader who is to answer the question, "What becomes of our probationers?" It is the class leader who is to know "if any walk disorderly among us and will not be reprov'd."

3. Spiritual. In order to understand the design of the class meeting spiritually, we must recall the condition of the Christian world in the matter of religious experience when it arose. Then few believed it possible for one to possess a divine witness of forgiven sin. He was treated as a fanatic who professed positive knowledge that he was accepted of God, and was socially ostracised. Under such circumstances it is not strange that men who were despised and persecuted longed for a place where each could tell his experience into sympathetic ears, and sing,

"What we have felt and seen
With confidence we tell."

Such was the threefold purpose of the class meeting. The years have brought some changes, but the essentials of the Christian life are the same now as they were a hundred years ago, and they will continue to be the same till the world shall burn itself out like a smoldering wick in its socket. The absolute need of doing that for which the class meeting stands was never more apparent nor more imperative than now.

Our fathers may have given too much attention to the inward side of religion. It is certain that we give too little attention to that side. All our organizations and institutional methods have relation only to externals. Ours is a heart need. We must *experience* religion. For religious training no means of grace compares with the class meeting. Give us the spiritual drill which the class meeting may supply, and we will produce an army of Carvossos who can handle the word of God as a veteran handles his sword. I suppose we are agreed that personal testimony is desirable. See, then, what opportunity is here presented. The class meeting has been the cradle of leaders, exhorters, local preachers, and traveling ministers. When the young man was converted he was assigned to a class. A stammering sentence was his first testimony, but practice gave confidence, and experience gave ability, and the leader said to the pastor, "That young man ought to be used for the church," and so our leaders and ministers were found out. But for the class meeting many of us would never have found our way to spiritual usefulness. In conversation with six of our leading preachers in New York it was found that five of them had been converted in the class meeting and through it had entered the ministry.

The class has been the mightiest aid in the development of the laymen of the Church, the utilizing

of whose talents has made our Church first in numbers among the Lord's hosts. Permit a little testimony from outside our fold to the value of this means of grace: Henry Ward Beecher once said, "The greatest thing John Wesley ever gave to the world is the Methodist class meeting." Mr. Moody testified that Methodist class meetings are the best institutions for training young converts the world ever saw. Dr. R. S. Storrs says: "The class meeting plan is essential to Methodism. It alone can counteract the evils of a changing and transient pastorate. I hope it will never be allowed to suffer decline." But, further than these personal testimonies, other denominations are showing their opinion of our class by adopting its principle. Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, and many others have their covenant or fellowship meetings, which are little else than our class meeting, and the Society of Christian Endeavor has become through its pledge the mightiest class meeting the Church ever saw.

What is the present attitude of the Methodist Church toward the class meeting? While the Church maintains that it has been the best means of grace to instruct the ignorant, to guide the inexperienced, to comfort the despondent, to restore the fallen, and promote the fellowship of believers, very many do not attend it. Is the trouble in the institution itself? If so, in what of its features?

Is the trouble with the people? Have they lost spirituality, or is there some change in their outward condition which makes the class less needful to their spiritual comfort and profit than in former times? So far as the people are concerned, it is doubtless true that some have lost their first love and no longer delight to talk of spiritual things. They are ill at ease with godly men and women, for their own hearts condemn them, and memory in the hands of conscience is a fearful scourge. Some object that people of refined tastes and thoughtful habit are averse to speaking of their inner life. It is too sacred to be discussed save with the closest friend. Such people have the mistaken notion that the class meeting is a confessional, and therefore stay away. Others object, "I cannot speak in meeting." Many who say this have a wrong idea of the purpose of such speaking. They think of it as a set address and measure it by logical and rhetorical rules, whereas it should be regarded as the simple testimony of a witness. For such testimony in our courts no education or culture is required—knowledge of the facts only. Gideon Ouseley tells how he was called to preach: "The voice said, 'Go preach My Gospel.' 'How can I go? I cannot speak, I am only a child.' 'Do you not know the disease, Gideon?' 'O yes, Lord, I do.' 'And do you know the cure?' 'Indeed I do, Lord, glory be to thy holy name.' 'Go, then,

Gideon, and tell these two things—the disease and the cure. All the rest is nothing but talk.’ ” Everyone should know that speaking in class is not compulsory, but we might find it a joy to speak if we remember Jesus’s words, “Ye are my witnesses.” We do not say that all who absent themselves from the class meeting or who refuse to testify in any of our services are backslidden in heart, but we wish to remind them that it was John’s testimony which won Andrew, and Andrew’s testimony which won Peter. It was the testimony of witnesses which established Christ’s resurrection and which will bring the ultimate triumph of his kingdom.

The critics who assail the class meeting as an institution tell us that times have changed. In the multiplication of social functions and humanitarian schemes there is no place for the class meeting. They are especially severe upon the leaders, who, they say, are dry and stereotyped, and we are treated to editorials on “Why Don’t He Get a New Story?” It is true that there are incompetent leaders, but the dearth of good leaders is quite as much the effect as the cause of the decline of the class meeting. We have largely ceased to train them. The old class leaders—men of wide knowledge of character and deep religious experience—have passed away, and we have not filled their places with trained young men and women. Laymen think that most preachers tell them all they

know in five years, and often ask a change in less time, but here are leaders who have been in the same class for twenty-five years and giving instruction every week. Is it any wonder that the leader goes over the same ground again and again, especially when we remember that he is absorbed ten hours a day in business matters? It is the pastor's duty to select proper leaders. If he cannot find them, let him train them. A class leader is surely as important a person as a Sunday school teacher. There are Sunday school conventions and teachers' meetings without number to fit the teacher to do his work intelligently. Let us have class leaders' conventions to discuss methods and plans, and, better still, to cry for spiritual anointing. If methods need to be changed let us change them; but let us bring back the old spiritual power of the class meeting.

The new emphasis which the times demand, which is perfectly legitimate and in our opinion will open to the class a new and enlarging life, is the emphasis of training. It is not enough that our members shall have training in the expression of their feelings or in public speech in general. There must be a definite and long-continued process of intellectual and spiritual drill if we are to produce strong, athletic, loyal soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The class meeting must be to the individual, religiously, what the gymnasium is

to the athlete; it must be to the Church what the preparatory school is to the college or what the military drill by companies is to the army. Properly conducted, it will make the weak muscular, the tyro in learning a scholar, the raw recruit a veteran. The Church can never be a conquering army without this training. It can never train a race of stalwart defenders of the faith unless they are taught to handle the sword of the Spirit and instructed how to put on and wear the whole armor of God. This drill covers the entire Christian life and cannot be secured in the Sunday school, the Epworth League, the theological school, or the prayer meeting. There is no drill ground like the class room. That is exactly fitted for this essential work. There we have seen the weakling become a giant, the child outmatch a college professor, a ragged line of raw recruits come to march with line and tread that would have brought huzzas from a Wellington, a Napoleon, or a Grant. But more than that, we have seen a dress parade become a battle and a battle become the devil's Waterloo, and that is the only battle worth while, for

"They only the victory win
Who have fought the good fight and have vanquished
The demon that tempts us within."

With a good God, an honest soul, the latent power, and a great cause, all we need is the drillmaster. Let us find him.

II

THE DRILLMASTER

THE motto which Bishop Fowler has furnished for our title-page is a declaration of our ecclesiastical faith when applied to the class leaders of our Church. This is the "crux" of the whole class meeting question. Given great leaders, the result will be full classes, growing members, and spiritual churches. Phillips Brooks could never believe in the doleful talk about empty churches, for he said, "All the churches where I preach are filled." We know scores of class leaders whose classes are crowded to the doors, and you cannot convince them that the class is a decayed or decaying institution.

The name which stands as the title of this volume is the announcement to many of a new function for the class leader, but it is really the most important function which he performs. Many have thought of the class simply as the place to relate an experience. Now, an experience is a blessed thing to have, and the relating of a genuine one will do great good, but Bishop Vincent spoke wisely when he said: "It is a pity to think of the class as a place for pious profession and as always

requiring a 'happy experience' or a praiseworthy report of one's own character and prospects. This conception works untold harm. It engenders superficiality, hypocrisy, and the worst form of selfishness. It trusts to temporary impulses. It discourages and repels truly humble, genuine, but timid souls."

The class meeting is the trysting place of those who hunger after righteousness and who would meet their Lord. It has produced giants in prayer, in exhortation, and in spiritual understanding. This thought, which we have already emphasized in the preceding chapter, leads us to consider what he must be who is to develop mind, heart, and soul.

1. The supreme thing about the drillmaster is his personality. It was the thing that Arnold of Rugby *was* that makes him a fixed star in the scholastic firmament. It was because Mark Hopkins was a full-orbed man that Garfield said he would rather sit on one end of a log with Mark Hopkins on the other than to have the tuition of other men in academic halls. A general whose life is vicious may lead troops to victory. He may inspire courage in a forlorn hope, put life under the ribs of death, and beat back a horde with a handful; but our drillmaster cannot train a recruit, or teach a student holy mysteries, unless he himself is God's man. Let him never forget that he who plays Samson's part will meet with Samson's fate. Many

a good man has come little by little to venture into the Philistine's territory until he rests in the lap of some secret sin. He may arise, challenged of friends or of enemies, to snap his cords. He may wist not that the Spirit of the Lord is departed from him, and he may go out as aforetime to do valiantly; but sin will make him as impotent as other men. Pity, pity for the man who has smitten God's enemies hip and thigh but who goes at last, blind and chained, to grind the devil's grists! "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

2. Next to quick conscience stands quick perception of the fitting and the good. Call it common sense if you please. That is a necessity for our drillmaster. If he lacks education the schools are open and he may get it; if he lacks spiritual wisdom God gives liberally and willingly; but if he has not common sense he cannot get it in the schools nor even at the mourner's bench. Let no man be appointed as leader, no matter what his attainments may be, unless he has common sense. With hobbyists to check and zealots to admonish, weak ones to encourage and the overconfident to restrain, and a class to protect from the jealous and malicious, the strongest will need all the wisdom of nature and grace.

3. The man who is to train others should be himself a trained man. "Too many leaders," says

Bishop Vincent, "do not seem to take the appointment seriously. They have little sense of responsibility. They do not read and study for the work; lack enthusiasm, adaptation, and ideas; do not visit pastorally, are irregular in the holding of meetings; in class are formal, tedious, and apathetic." We elsewhere speak of the spiritual training and preparation of the leader. Nothing can exceed this in importance. He must be mightily endowed with the power of the Holy Ghost; but we must also insist upon thorough intellectual training for the handling of spiritual truth. A class leader cannot long preserve the respect of the thoughtful, nor indeed his own self-respect, if he blunders along in ignorance where he is set to train and instruct. It is true that a leader is not called to be a master in philosophy, or history, or literature, or science, but he owes it to every member of his class not to falsify history, or science, or philosophy. He must, at least, know enough not to misrepresent. Opportunities are everywhere presented for the class leader to fit himself for his work. Lay Workers' Institutes and Bible training schools are within the reach of all by personal presence or correspondence, and there is no excuse but indolence and apathy for the man who goes on in ignorance to train his members to deeper ignorance. If knowledge is power, what shall we say of the awful power of spiritual ignorance?

4. Our drillmaster will be patient on the field. Many a drill sergeant has turned in disgust from his awkward squad, and many a class leader has been impatient at the slow growth of his members. If there is growth at all, have patience. Did not God have patience with you? Character grows slowly, but it lasts forever. It will pay to spend a long time upon it. "Why do you tell that child the same thing twenty times?" asked the father of the Wesleys. "Because nineteen times are not sufficient," answered the mother. The true drillmaster will also be patient under fire. There are sometimes differences of opinion which will touch him to the quick. While he has a short method for the incorrigible crank, he must be careful to use it on no others. In patience let him possess his soul.

5. The duty of the drillmaster is as much heart training as head training. He must have a heart himself. The great, weary world needs sympathy, encouragement, and hope. Our leader has a sunny face and a warm heart. He is hopeful, for he bears a message of hope to all men. His voice has in it the ring of ultimate triumph, and it is not without the fruitful touch of tears. He will weep over the desolation of Jerusalem, but like Nehemiah he will hasten to rebuild her gates. His cheerful yesterdays help him to confident to-days and victorious to-morrows, and his faith is contagious.

6. It is true that the ideal class leader is "born,

not made," but there is not enough of him to go around. The work of the world is not done by men of ideal excellence. Geniuses are rare, or else they have a habit of shirking. Common people with uncommon purpose and devotion are the ones who appear at roll call with their "Here am I; send me."

Rev. Edward Smith, of England, speaking of such leaders, says, "Sanctified commonplace folk earn for themselves in this office a good degree, thereby shaming those who could have had all their competency at much less cost of self-training and a much briefer apprenticeship." Some of the most successful leaders the Church has known were of this sort. They were "made" leaders, but God took a hand in the making, as he did with Moody, and their power and efficiency grew with the years. O hesitant leader, conscious of limitations, hear the testimony of Amos! "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees: and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord."

7. It is not necessary that age or sex should be considered in the appointment of a leader. Our own experience is in line with that of Rev. Simpson Johnson, of the Wesleyan Church: "When a class has become vacant we have looked round for

a solid, staid member, and out of respect to age and long standing we have often appointed men whose minds were *crystallized* and in some cases *fossilized*. It would often be better to lay hands on a young man whose mind is supple, whose heart is all aglow, and who is likely to carry some spirit, enterprise, and adaptation into the meeting." We have recently appointed some young men as leaders and their success has been remarkable. It goes without saying that no young person should be appointed who is not fully grounded in the fundamentals of the Gospel and of good judgment. Where these are apparent do not hesitate to put young blood into the leadership. It is unnecessary to make a plea for the appointment of consecrated women to this office. Their work, especially in the religious care of the young, is approved by a blessed history. The Church of Susanna Wesley, Hester Ann Rogers, Mary Fletcher, Frances Willard, Lucy Webb Hayes, will not hesitate to use the noble successors of these saintly women in the high office of spiritual training.

The drillmasters next to the pastors of Methodism hold in their hands the future of our great militant Church. When the victory that is sure to come shall be won God will greatly honor them. We often go to a country churchyard where a class leader lies buried and read on the humble stone the simple inscription. There is nothing in it to stay

the foot of the passer-by, but there is another monument, more lasting and splendid, which that leader reared himself. He was the drillmaster who trained a score of young men who are now leaders of the Lord's hosts. Some are in the pulpit, some are masters of great wealth which they have consecrated to God, some are trainers like himself, and others set the step for the rank and file. When I see their godly lives or read the tributes to their praise I say in my heart, These are the drillmaster's monument.

III

THE PASTOR AND THE CLASS

THE pastor is the most important factor in the success of the class meeting, and, conversely, no organization or institution of our Church is so helpful to the pastor as the class properly constituted and worked. The pastor must be held responsible in large degree for the classes, since it is his duty to assign all members to classes and to appoint and dismiss leaders. If members are not pleased with their class, he can transfer them to another; if leaders are incompetent, he can train or dismiss them.

To stimulate the members and encourage the leader let him attend class himself. If the members need to attend, so does the pastor. It is just as easy to backslide in the study as in the shop or market. The temptations of a minister are just as manifold and quite as insidious as those which attack the average member. He therefore needs the class for itself. Has the meeting been dull and uninteresting? Then let the pastor speak—tears in his voice, conviction in his soul, his heart to theirs. The dull meeting quivers with life, leader and members are aroused, and that class meeting

talk will be remembered long after Sunday's sermon is forgotten.

If it is objected that the pastor has no time for this, because of so many other religious and semi-religious duties, we answer that we shall not fear for the class meeting if the pastor will settle upon his knees the relative spiritual importance of his duties and take them up in their order. It ought to be said that the pastors of the largest churches in Methodism are also class leaders. If they can do this with a thousand or more members on their hands, it ought not to be impossible for the average pastor. Hugh Price Hughes gives great credit to the class meeting for the success of his work, and says there are now fifteen hundred people actually meeting in class in the West End of London.

Again, it is the pastor's duty to set before his members the class as it really is. Many have formed a wrong idea of it and therefore do not attend it. They need to know that it is not a confessional; it is not a place where one's personality is improperly invaded nor a place where one must speak whether he will or not. Methodists need to know that any one method is not the class meeting. Change methods as much as changing times and customs make necessary, but the need for the class meeting idea is a fundamental need of the soul. Sin and sorrow and death do not change with ages

or climes, and anything which gives men victory over these is not antiquated or useless.

The pastor needs the class to make complete his pastoral oversight. Some pastors divide their parish among visitors, giving a special territory to each. These visitors have a superintendent to whom they report, who reports in turn to the pastor. All that is provided for much better in the class, and that plan remains whether pastors come or go. If the leader cannot visit all, he appoints visitors from his members. These report to him, and he to his pastor. Thus every member of the church is kept under the pastor's eye. The sick are cheered, the newcomer welcomed, the unhappy kindly encouraged. We cannot understand how a pastor can allow himself to be deprived of the best agency human ingenuity ever devised to keep watch over his flock. The great question in our large cities is how to keep track of our members. Our Conference reports for the last few years are not encouraging. In New York and New York East Conferences, covering Greater New York and its suburbs, the *Minutes* show that with more than five hundred pastors and one hundred and twenty-four thousand members and probationers at work, with \$14,000,000 invested in church property and \$457,000 spent for current expenses, we have made but little if any advance for several years. It is very likely that this loss is due to the striking off

of the names of those whose whereabouts are unknown and who have become careless and indifferent themselves. This is just the point of our contention. If these persons had been looked after, as the purpose of the class is, their whereabouts would be known and their interest preserved. Bishop Fowler was right when he said: "We have not lost by doctrinal schism. Our leakage is not in the arteries, but in the veins. The loss of the individual to activity and membership is our peril." Against this only the class, or something that will do its work, can secure us.

The chief object of the class meeting is to develop spiritual life, and in this capacity it is the most important aid to the pastor and the membership. The crying need of the Church is a deeper spiritual life. Societies multiply. There is the clatter and clank of endless ecclesiastical machinery. Some of it is necessary, much of it is good. It is well to start kindergartens and soup kitchens, nurseries and dispensaries. It is well to care for the body, but every body has a soul which will outlast it. The institutional church has come, but it will be "of the earth earthy" unless something shall nobly spiritualize it. For all this machinery there must be some mighty, impelling, spiritual power. It is for that we plead. To nourish soul life is our supreme business.

• The class meeting affords an opportunity for spiritual exercise which can be found nowhere else. This world is to be won to Christ by Christian testimony, and the Church is to be led by the same means to highest Christian attainment. The individual also needs the subjective influence which comes from witnessing for Christ. It was not better guns, but better drill in the men behind the guns, that gave us Manila, Santiago, San Juan, and El Caney. Think of the great opportunity for spiritual training which the class meeting affords. It is seldom that more than forty persons take part in a prayer meeting, but in one of our large churches a recent count showed that there were four hundred and sixty-three present at the class meetings of the week, and that two hundred and sixty-six persons gave testimony. If Christian testimony is worth anything to self or to others, who shall measure the advantage of such a cloud of witnesses?

Our appeal is to the pastors. If they wish the class meeting idea enforced, they know how to do it. If better class leaders are needed, they know how to train them. Give us as many conventions for class leaders as are held for Sunday school teachers, with as much instruction in spirit and plan, and we will need no apologies for lack of increase of members or spirituality. With spiritual power at the front there will be force enough for

education, missions, revivals, and every holy endeavor.

The class meeting proved itself for a hundred years the pastor's best ally. It helped to make us numerically the largest of the Lord's hosts, and its spirit has pervaded other communions for their great good. Give it opportunity, and it will still work marvels for us. Not the old forms, of necessity, but certainly the old spiritual power. Add to this such new form and method as a consecrated experience may suggest, and victory is ours.

IV

THE CLASS LEADER AS SUBPASTOR

WITH the division of the church membership into classes, and the assignment of a leader to each, there goes of necessity the idea that the leader accepts the responsibility of the spiritual guidance and nurture of those committed to his charge. He stands to them in an important sense as pastor, as shepherd of the flock. Are there lambs? He is to give them suitable food. Are there sheep, wayward and unruly? He is to see that they are in the fold. If they will not come of their own motion he must tenderly constrain them. If they grow restive in the fold he must still deal with them patiently. So deals the Good Shepherd even with the class leader himself, and he will be most like his Lord when his watchfulness and patience is most like his Master's.

This, then, as we apprehend it, is the situation which confronts a class leader when a probationer is assigned to his class: The Church holds him responsible for the development of a personal Christian life, just as the teacher in the public schools is held responsible for the development of a child's intellectual life. The first thing, then, is to

make the personal acquaintance of the new member. We will suppose that he attends the class to which he is assigned. The leader will carefully note his testimony and like a true physician seek to make a diagnosis of the case that he may know what therapeutic, prophylactic, or tonic treatment is needed. During the meeting or after it he will introduce the newcomer to the other members of his class with such personal reference as may seem wise. He will converse somewhat at length, if opportunity offers and wisdom suggests, that he may know something of former life, mental habits, daily occupations, or other facts that may help him to be a physician to this man's soul. The course of procedure in such a case seems clear, but it often happens that the leader finds himself in circumstances wholly different from this.

The name of a new member or probationer is read by the pastor, and the member or probationer appears at the altar and is greeted by the pastor and the officers of the church. His name is published in the next week's bulletin of the church, and he is assigned to this leader's class. The leader is on the lookout for him the next week at the class; but he does not come, nor do the weeks which follow bring him. What shall the leader do? Visit him, by all means, if this is a possibility. One visit is better than ten letters or a hundred postal cards. Find out why he does not come. If his

business is such that he cannot come, the leader will be glad to know this fact, and will not forget that he is still responsible for that member's spiritual welfare. He will therefore see him the more frequently or send some other members of the class to supplement the leader's call. If the member is a probationer, only personal knowledge of his life will make it possible for the leader to answer for him when his probation expires. We have known cases where probationers were unable to attend class at all, although living an exemplary Christian life. In one case where the probationer's name was read in the leaders and stewards' meeting the pastor said, "I find he is assigned to Brother A.'s class. Will Brother A. report on his case?" Brother A. replied, "I know nothing about him. He has not been to class once during six months." It proved on inquiry that it was a physical impossibility for the probationer to be present and that the delinquent had been the leader and not the member. It is the leader's business to know why his members do not come to class. Desirable as class attendance is, the law of our Church does not require it as a rule of admission to or retention of membership in the Church. A leader cannot fulfill his duty to his class without personal knowledge of his members. To undertake leadership without that is to shepherd a flock *in absentia*.

Every leader should feel a sense of great disap-

pointment and chagrin if a probationer in his class fails to be advanced to full membership on the expiration of his probation. It was for that purpose that the leader undertook his care, and a failure to secure such advancement means a failure of his work. Of course, it will sometimes happen that no amount of faithfulness on the part of the class leader will move the delinquent to a holy life, as it often happens that no amount of faithfulness on the part of the teacher will move the scholar to application. In such cases the failure to advance is in no wise a reflection upon his instruction.

While it will not be possible for a leader with fifty or more in his class to give the time for frequent visitations of those who do not come to class, it is true for the most part that the larger number are confirmed in their absence or inability and their cases well known, so that frequent visitations will not be needed. There are some whom the leader may hope greatly to help. It is the formative period of their lives. An evening given to such a case may take the leader from a warm fire and a pleasant book, but it will return him blessed interest to all eternity for his self-denial.

In all God's universe there is no higher business than to be a shepherd of souls. To that work the class leader is called. Pastors come and go, but he may stay on, his influence growing with the added years and scores passing from his instruction to

bear forever the mark of his faithful work. Let him study to show himself approved unto God, regularly dispensing the word of truth, giving milk to babes, strong meat to men, and watching over them as one who must give account for their souls.

V

THE HISTORIC CLASS MEETING

THE origin of the classes is so well understood and so frequently stated that I need take but few lines to set it forth. The United Societies arose in 1739, but classes were not formed until February, 1742. During a consultation of the brethren concerning the payment of the debt on the Bristol Chapel, Captain Fry said, "Let every man give a penny a week and it will easily be done." But it was objected, "Many are too poor." "Then," said the captain, "put eleven of the poorest with me, I will see them weekly. If they can give nothing I will give for them. Each of you do the same." "The very thing we have wanted so long," said Wesley. As a matter of fact, the United Societies themselves were at the first little more than class meetings. Our general rules open with a statement of this fact: "In the latter end of the year 1739 eight or ten persons who appeared to be deeply convinced of sins, and earnestly groaning for redemption, came to Mr. Wesley in London. They desired, as did two or three more the next day, that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come,

which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That he might have more time for this great work, he appointed a day when they might all come together; which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday, in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), he gave those advices from time to time which he judged most needful for them; and they always concluded their meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities. This was the rise of the United Society, first in Europe, and then in America. Such a society is no other than ‘a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.’ ”

While the distinction between classes and class meetings should not be lost sight of, if we remember the spiritual significance of these earlier meetings, it will appear that the class meeting was, after all, the original idea, and that our present classes, conducted as they are, look back rather to 1739 than to 1742 for their origin. It is, however, true that, so far as method is concerned, that which was providentially adopted and developed by the Bristol society has come to be more nearly the model of the classes of to-day. In that particular

case there was originally an important difference both in point of method and time between the classes and class meeting, and it may with propriety be said that many class leaders who have adopted the method of class meeting have quite forgotten the idea of the class as originally shown by the personal visitation and in the conduct of the leader and his members in the home and place of business.

- Mr. Wesley saw that the raising of money was but an incidental and secondary thing, and that the greater usefulness of the class leaders would be in
- matters spiritual. Mr. Wesley called his leaders together to report. It appeared that some of their members walked disorderly, and he desired that from that time forward each leader should inquire particularly into the conduct and spiritual life of
- those whom he visited weekly. The effect of this personal solicitude was so marked that the same method was adopted in London. "The effect of it everywhere was that evil men were detected and reprov- ed. If they forsook their sins they were
- gladly retained, but if they obstinately persisted it was openly declared they were not of us."

Thus far there had been no class *meetings*, properly so called, throughout the societies. It soon became apparent that this plan could not be worked in all cases. Many of the leaders were so employed during the day that they could not spare the time

to visit their members, and it was also impossible or inexpedient to visit many of the members who were in the mines or at service. It was impossible to see them except in the company of others, and this did not answer the end proposed, that of exhorting, comforting, or reproofing them. "It frequently happened also that one affirmed what another denied, and this could not be cleared up without seeing the members together." Upon all of these considerations it was agreed that the members of each class should meet together. By this means every inquiry was made into the conduct of each, advice or reproof given as necessity required, and after an hour thus spent they concluded with prayer and thanksgiving. This was the origin of the class meeting and also of the leaders' meeting. Thus far, however, the leader has played the principal part, the members meeting to receive at his hand such correction and direction as he saw fit to give.

Another element, which has been for the last one hundred years the chief characteristic of the class meeting, soon appeared—namely, the interchange of Christian experience. It is quite probable that this, like the class meeting itself, was a growth which took place without special preparation. Nothing could have been more natural than that a large number of the class, who were walking humbly with God, should have such a deep and personal

revelation of his will and love as would greatly encourage by its recital the faith and practice of the brethren.

• In this they were not without example and encouragement in the Band Meetings of the Moravians. It was in a Moravian prayer meeting, in May, 1738, that Mr. Wesley said: "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I had trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. I then testified to all there what I now felt in my heart." It was an easy step for this idea of Christian testimony to mount to the first place of importance in any plan for the proper development of the Christian life.

• Mr. Wesley was taught that Christianity was not a religion for solitude and the solitary. "You wish to serve God and go to heaven. You cannot serve him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." Dr. Stevens says Wesley never forgot these words, which perhaps forecast the history of his life.

• Mr. Wesley himself said in later years respecting the class meetings: "It can hardly be conceived what advantages have been gained from this providential regulation. Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had

not so much as a thought before. They began to bear one another's burdens and naturally to care for each other."

- We see now the class meeting, practically in its present form, universally adopted. It becomes the nucleus of the Church, for without it, theoretically,
- no Methodist church can exist. I speak elsewhere of its financial, disciplinary, and spiritual purposes. The question which now presents itself is, What has been the practical working of the class meeting in Methodism for the past one hundred years? For many years attendance at class was a test of membership, and I understand it so remains
 - in Great Britain at the present time. In America the classes are placed *among* the means of grace, and an attendance upon them is specified as a Christian duty; but that attendance is no longer a test of membership. In other days such attendance was obligatory, but many did not attend and were still not expelled. The Rev. Asa Kent, stern old disciplinarian, expelled the wife of the most prominent member of his church for failing to attend class; but the circumstances surrounding the case were such that evil rather than good came both to the church and the parties concerned.

It is always human nature to think that the old days were the best days, to lose sight of the unsuccessful and unpleasant and remember only those matters which are recalled with delight. In any

enumeration of the comparative attendance at class meeting or other meetings of Christians it must be remembered that the percentage in a limited membership is almost invariably greater than in a large membership, and this with reason. The larger the membership the further removed they are likely to be from the church and the less opportunity for personal contact and oversight on the part of the pastor and leader. Bearing this in mind, we make bold to affirm, from data in our possession, that the attendance at class in the churches with which we are personally acquainted has not materially fallen off in the last fifty years. To many this will seem a strong statement, as we are accustomed to think and to speak of the decadence of the class meeting and to accept the fact without the least contention; but the complaint of the decadence of the class is only the echo of other years. John Miley, fifty years ago, lamented the disposition of the Church to turn from the class meeting and the failure to appreciate its advantages. The opposition against the class meeting as an institution was quite as clearly marked then as now. In reference to it he uses a sentence which sounds as if it were written to-day: "Recently the tendency everywhere is to unsettle the whole foundation, break up or modify long and well tried systems, and substitute new and untried theories. This we regard as a hazardous experiment. No rage for improvement

or reform should induce us to abandon what we have proved to be safe and profitable until we are sure of obtaining something better in exchange for it. . . . To abolish class meetings would be virtually to abandon Methodism and let our church members fall back into lifeless formality." Twenty-five years ago Dr. Daniel Wise wrote: "That there is a tendency, more or less decided, throughout Methodism to suffer the class meeting to sink into neglect, it were folly to deny. As a means of instructing the ignorant, restoring the fallen, and of promoting the fellowship of believers it is a valuable auxiliary to the Church. Nevertheless, in spite of its intrinsic worth, the ugly fact of its growing unattractiveness to many stares us in the face." It would be easy to multiply quotations from the writings of the leading minds of our Church at any period during the last fifty years, to show that their hearts were pained at the failure of the Church to appreciate and use the means of grace called the class meeting. Therefore the complaint of earnest people in our time concerning the absence of many of our members from the class is not a new thing, but simply a repetition of the sorrow which pious souls have always felt when Christians have forsaken the assembling of themselves together for holy spiritual exercises.

That there is great cause for sorrow at the present time we hasten to admit; but we are not with-

out hope. Indeed, there are indications all about us of a great quickness of interest on the part of pastors, leaders, and members. Class meeting conventions are almost a new thing in Methodism, but they are being held throughout the country, east and west, north and south. Requests have come to the writer from almost every State in the Union, asking him to make addresses or to send literature which may be helpful in stimulating interest in this historic means of grace. In a recent number of the *Methodist Review* Bishop Vincent gives a most interesting report of the October conventions which were held at his suggestion throughout Europe. More than a thousand of these conventions were held, and many thousands of the laity took part in them. The subject of class meetings was the first of four topics named for discussion. Bishop Vincent says: "One is glad to know that the class meeting in Continental Methodism is still a most important factor, and that in English Methodism, thanks very largely to the wisdom and breadth and vigor of ex-President Hugh Price Hughes and the *Methodist Times*, it is experiencing a genuine and we trust a permanent revival. For we may be sure that Methodism of the true type goes up or down with the growth or deterioration of the class meeting."

Spiritual men everywhere are coming to feel that, whatever changes may be made in method,

something must be done which will give the Church the spiritual training which the class meeting has been so effective in accomplishing in the past. This brings us to the consideration of the present problem of the class.

VI

THE PRESENT PROBLEM OF THE CLASS

"New occasions bring new duties,
Time makes ancient good uncouth;
He must upward still and onward
Who would keep abreast of truth."

—*Lowell.*

IN speaking of the class meeting I find two classes of people. There are some who believe that the usefulness of the class to-day is exactly measured by its reproduction of the forms and customs, the pet phrases and allocutions, which they recall in the class meetings of their youth. There are others who would banish every semblance to the meeting of other years. They would throw over the old simply because it is old, and they insist upon superior wisdom as their private possession. We do not sympathize with either of these classes. Some things in the old class meetings were purely incidental and had nothing whatever to do with the success of the meeting, unless it may be said that the spiritual power of the occasion was so great that the meeting was successful in spite of them.

People who constantly recall the old methods and decry any change need to remember that spiritual life is something deeper than garments to

wear or posture in prayer or succession of testimony. These have little or nothing to do with the essential thing for which the class meeting stands. But those who would change the class meeting so as to make it purely an hour for literature, geography, or history must remember that, good as these are in their places, they are not the thing for which the class meeting stands. Change your methods and do not be disturbed at the change. Do not haggle over little things and lose your patience and peace of mind over the size and color of the receptacle that brings you the great gift of God. Do not forget that however beautiful the receptacle may be it will be a bitter disappointment to the hungry soul if it is found to be empty. It goes without saying that the problem pressing upon the heart of every pastor to-day is, How can I train in experience and righteousness the church committed to my care? "Doubtless," said old Izaak Walton, "God could have made a better fruit than the strawberry, but doubtless God never did." Perhaps some better scheme than the class meeting could have been devised for the development of spiritual life, but nothing better has been devised, and nothing better is in sight. It is not a question of choosing between the class meeting and some other means of grace. It is for most members of the church a question between the training of the class room or no training at all, and in such a situa-

tion the course of every lover of the Church must be plain.

Among the problems that present themselves for solution are the following:

1. How to make the pastor the ardent supporter of this means of grace. His support is absolutely essential for its success in any church, and there are few churches where a faithful pastor who devotes himself by precept and practice to the work cannot largely increase its efficiency. Many pastors have too easily become pessimists. The thing that ought to be done can be done. Bishop Vincent says: "The pastor must believe in the class meeting—its possibilities and the secret of its efficiency. He must accept the teaching of the Discipline, paragraphs 28-33, 50-55, 101, 193, and Appendix, 64. If he does not have this measure of faith in the class he should seek a place in the ministry outside of Methodism. Our success imperatively demands the acceptance and appreciation of the Methodist theory on the subject of class meetings. We should hold conferences with and give systematic instruction to the class leaders, expounding the Discipline and lecturing to them on such subjects as 'The Care of Souls,' 'The Use of the Bible in Spiritual Guidance,' 'The Ways of the Spirit in the Inner Life,' etc., etc. The pastor should cultivate a class enthusiasm, visiting each class occasionally, inviting them to his own house, adminis-

tering to each class at least once a year the holy sacrament, and using that opportunity for exhorting them to a more perfect consecration of themselves, their children, and their property to the service of God."

Can anyone doubt that such action on the part of any pastor would go far toward settling the problem of the class in any church?

2. Next to the pastor, and hardly second in point of importance, stands the leader. The great problem of the class meeting centers in him. The faithful leader whose zeal is according to knowledge and whose heart is tender will be likely to have a large class. The securing of such leaders is the prerogative and duty of the pastor, but he cannot make them such. Only hearts given up to Christ in glad and complete surrender, to spend and to be spent in the service of humanity, can measure up to the high and holy place in which the class leader must walk. If the class is failing to do its work there should be great heart-searching on the part of the leader. He must remember that it is not enough to have an honest purpose to help the class. Elsewhere we shall speak of his need for preparation. Let him never forget that he must have something to offer that is worth while if he expects his members to come eagerly to their meeting place. He cannot drag them there by publicly complaining against them or by privately

scourging them. It is the duty of the leader as shepherd to serve each member of his flock to the extent of his ability.

3. The third problem relates to the class itself and concerns both the leader and the members. If there are leaders who abuse the Church and its ministers, there are also members who ride pet hobbies, who have spurs but no bits, who make pharisaical boasts and accuse their neighbors of religious sloth when their private life is quite as pure and useful as that of the accuser. There are class meeting killers who undertake to explain prophecy and interpret all the mysteries of the Bible as well as to set right the theology of their fellow-members. If the class is to be a success the majority of its members must unite with the leader to keep out of it censoriousness, self-glorification, subtle questions, and foolish whims.

4. The final problem relates to those whose religious indifference keeps them from the meeting. How shall these be made to love and frequent this means of grace? The answer to this problem must be found in the personal contact of heart with heart. Zeal is kindled by unselfish love. Hearts that are cold may still be warmed by personal contact. Those who have become alienated may be won again by patient toil. The Spirit of God seen in the life of a brother and working through him is able to build again the fires which have burned

low or have gone out and to heal the backslidings that threaten to engulf a soul.

Such are some of the problems of the class meetings. Though difficult, they are not impossible of solution. Sanctified zeal and common sense will work wonders.

VII

THE CLASS LEADER'S PREPARATION

"THIS kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting," said Jesus to his disciples after their chagrin and humiliation at their failure at Cæsarea Philippi. For a class leader to go to his class without special preparation is an impertinence in the sight of God, and he is equally to be blamed with that preacher who presumes to enter his pulpit unprepared. To say that one has only to open his mouth and God will fill it, and apply it to the regular ministry of the class leader, is to utterly misapprehend the responsibility of the individual. Every great triumph in the life of Jesus came after great preparation alone with God for nights or weeks. The victory over the devil comes after forty days of solitary prayer. The transfiguration comes after prayer has worked its transformation. For Moses, Paul, Luther, Bunyan, Wesley, years of preparation in the Arabian Desert, lonely Bedford jail, and meditation in city and wilderness. No great thing was ever done for God or man without ample preparation. It is true that Webster may give a reply to Hayne with only a few hours of preparation, but the moment only put speed to

the preparation of a lifetime. "How long were you preparing that sermon?" asked a preacher when Bishop Foster had swept a Conference by his great sermon on Immortality. "Forty years," was his answer. A young preacher said to a superannuate who had filled only the smallest appointments during his ministry, "How did you ever get two sermons a week ready? I only preach once. I begin my sermon Tuesday and work until Saturday and then feel that I am not ready." "I never made any fuss of that sort," said the superannuate, "nor bothered with preparation. I usually choose my text on my way to church or after I enter the pulpit." The young man thought he must be lacking in the essentials of a preacher either spiritually or intellectually and was almost ready to give up his ministry, but when he told a discriminating layman who had sat under the superannuate's preaching, he was comforted to hear him say, "We all knew he selected his text after he got to church by the way he preached."

Is it any wonder that the class meeting is forsaken by the thoughtful and devout if the leader shows that he does not think it of sufficient importance to give an hour from business or pleasure to prepare for it? To say that one has no time for preparation is not true. Take it from business, take it from sleep, if necessary; but take it or give up the class. In most cases it is not the time, but

the disposition, that is wanting. The merchant will find time while he waits for a customer; the traveling man as he journeys by steam or trolley; the laboring man as he works, or as he rests at his noon hour, or retires for the night. But do not make the mistake of waiting till the day or the night of the meeting before beginning that preparation. Intellectual and spiritual shiftlessness is the curse of the pulpit and the class room. It is just as easy to be ahead of time as behind time. Seize the first opportunity instead of the last and you will drive your engagements before you instead of being overwhelmed by them.

The leader's chief need is spiritual preparation. For that he must spend some time in communion with God. He who comes from a garden of roses bears their perfume with him. "They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus" is the testimony of eighteen centuries to the power of personal communion with the Infinite. The members of a class room feel the power when their leader talks with God as friend talketh with friend. Only the man who has frequent communion can do that. There are too few who make a real communing with God. To many prayer is only the begging for something desired, often a selfish and a secular thing. Such do not understand the spirit and the power of prayer.

The art of meditation is with many a lost art.

“While I was musing the fire burned,” said the psalmist, and every thinker who has given himself to it has been astonished to see how marvelously the habit of meditation, of rumination, opens up every subject and enriches the mind. This is a part of that mental preparation which fits the class leader for his work. The class leader must be a man of one book. He must know his Bible and store his mind with passages affecting every phase of experience. Such a man was Carvosso, and his class meetings were marvelous in their power. Read, as opportunity presents, the stirring thoughts of our great preachers and the inspiring records of Christian biography. Be on the lookout for impressive illustrations and put them away for future use. There is no excuse for a dull and profitless class meeting. Any leader who has the average amount of tact backed by Christian experience can have a successful meeting if he is willing to pay the price; but an empty leader will have an empty class. If he would have others to think, he must think himself. If he would develop others in Christian graces, he must grow himself. If he would have his members enriched by attendance at his class, he must make a notable contribution himself to its interest and spirituality. Preparation of mind and spirit will enable him to do it. Leader, are you willing to pay the price?

VIII

TACT AND VERSATILITY

FEW words are less understood than the word "tact." It is often used as a synonym for yielding and compliance, if not for artifice and deception. The true meaning of the word is far removed from this. Tact means, etymologically considered, delicacy of touch; and only the man who has a fine feeling for the sensibilities, the prejudices, and the environment of men can make an ideal class leader. Mr. Lecky, in his *Map of Life*, contends that tact is more valuable than brilliancy, eloquence, or originality, and cites the case of a great governor, who always seemed to gain his point, yet he never appeared to be in antagonism with anyone. The steady pressure of a firm and consistent will was scarcely felt when it was accompanied by the ready recognition of everything that was good in the argument of another and by a charm of manner and of temper which seldom failed to disarm opposition and win personal affection.

There is nothing more sensitive than the trained human touch. When Alvan Clark was doing the final polishing of the lens of one of his great telescopes that was to set the observer side by side with rushing worlds, he trusted not to machinery or

measurements, but to the preternatural sensibility of his own finger tips. Here is something for the class leader to think about. Some have made the mistake of thinking that "hair was especially created to be rubbed the wrong way," and are never quite sure that they have been faithful to their duty unless they have crossed, buffeted, and angered some one. They are proud of their bluntness and lie in wait for a chance to disagree. They have the keen eye of a doctor to discover the spot where the skin is off, and an acid ready for the torture of their victim. It may be safely affirmed that Jesus did not have these men in mind when he said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Without any compromise of principle one may still be tactful. Remembering the attitude of his Lord toward the bruised reed and the dimly burning wick, he will be tactful and patient. The leader is to be all things to all men that he may win some. "He has such a winning way," said the members of a certain class, speaking of their leader, and when this comment reached his ears he blushed and said, "It is my duty to win men."

If a man is in just the place God would have him he will be tactful—that is, his own heart will be tender and loving and his touch will be like the touch of a mother. If some one goes but slowly along the way he will not beat him down, lest he go not at all.

The tactful leader will not only have a delicate appreciation of others' feelings and be careful not to wound them, but he will also have an intuitive sense of that which is fitting and appropriate. He will not give meat to babes, nor will he fail to give to the strong Christian man food convenient for him. He will have eyes to see what will be an incentive to the laggard or a balm to the wounded in spirit. He will in each case suit the remedy to the malady. If it be true, as Bentham says, that the turn of a sentence has decided many a friendship and, for aught we know, the fate of many a kingdom, it behooves us to be careful lest the fate of a soul may poise upon one word.

Whittier felt the importance of this thought and sang:

“These trifles! can it be they make or mar
A human life?

Are souls as lightly swayed as rushes are
By love or strife?

Yea, yea! A look the fainting heart may break,
Or make it whole;

And just one word, if said for love's sweet sake,
May save a soul.”

The man of tact must of necessity be versatile. He will not narrow himself to one line of thought or action. There is no hobby on earth good enough to be ridden all the time. Something new, something bright and striking, must be presented if interest is to be aroused and preserved. As all

roads lead to Rome, so some men, no matter in what direction they start, come around to their pet 'ology, and one can tell as well before the meeting opens as at its close the substance of what will be said. Nothing is more diversified than the Christian life. All experience and all literature are open. History and biography hold the noblest inspirations and the most terrible warnings. The activities of the soul are so manifold that the only excuse for a dull meeting is the absence of honest purpose in preparation and prayer. I say prayer, because "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." Many a time have I seen a narrow intellect expand marvelously under its power. And why should it not be so? The man who talks with God will surely hear something that is worth while. God's thoughts are as multitudinous as the stars and as varied as the beauties of land and sea. Let the old artist's advice to his pupil ring in our ears—"Amplius!"—Wider! It is not a narrow theme that you take to the class room. If you would speak of nature, it will lead you to Him who made flowers and worlds. If you speak of moral law, Christ gave it and came to magnify it. If virtue delight you, he was the brightest example of it. If you talk of worldly pleasures, he has shown what are wise. If you long for heavenly delights, he only can show you the way hither. If ethical motives attract you, he

embodied them. If human history beckon you, it is only the story of God working among men. All things combine to give force to the leader's words if only he himself have eyes to see and ears to hear. Pray and study. With the tender touch of a loving heart win men. With the thrilling interest of a mind broad and eager stir the heart of the sluggard and uplift the indifferent.

IX

METHODS IN CLASS LEADING

“THE plague that besets the class meeting is not hypocrisy but dullness.” Anything, if not irreverent, is better than stagnation. “He died of too much self-control” will be the verdict of the angels’ autopsy over many a fair professor. There is a decorum which is fitting and of great spiritual help, but the value of a leader’s talk in class is not determined by its soporific effect. Bishop Taylor in one of his early books, *The Model Preacher*, has a chapter on “Surprises,” in which he maintains that “There is an essential law of humanity implanted within by Him who made us, which imperiously demands variety, with all the sudden transitions and contrasts which characterize the kingdoms of nature, providence, and grace.” Not much good can be done unless the attention can be held. This the uncommon and unusual is quite sure to do. We are not to gather from this that the class leader should be on the constant strain for something *outré* and sensational, but we long ago made up our mind that we could better stand some extravagances, if they came from a good and honest heart, than to put up constantly with decorous, dead

monotony. Methodism cannot now be accused of want of decorum, for we are as proper and almost as dull as the other Churches.

Now the leader should seek to make his class a place of intellectual and spiritual alertness. It is he who must adopt methods to needs and introduce such variety, not to say surprises, as will quicken the interest and challenge the attention of every member.

Mark Guy Pearse makes Daniel Quorm say: "A leader ought to be a kind o' doctor that can give to each one the prescription he needs; that can deal out his Lord's medicine and make up a strengthening plaster for them as is weak in the back and can't stand very well, and can clap on a stiff blister to them as have caught the fever of worldliness, and can make a pill for sluggish livers, which is the commonest kind o' ailin'." Daniel's notion of a class meeting is worth repeating: "Class meetings be like awls and needles—they'll go as long as ever you can keep 'em bright; but when they get dull they'll rust and then it be hard work. We leaders must keep the place bright and cheerful and attractive if we want to keep the members. Why I should every bit as soon think o' goin' to class with the wax and grease on my hands, as soon think o' goin' with my apron on and in my shirt sleeves, as think o' takin' all my cares and worries. I get away first of all and lose all my own fears and

troubles in the lovin' care of my heavenly Father. I get my own heart put into tune and then the rest'll take the right pitch from me. And then with the fire burnin' I get away to meetin'."

Certain principles should be borne in mind: The meeting should begin on time. Put the meeting at such an hour as best suits the class, and then begin on the stroke of the clock. Carelessness in this matter is the beginning of failure. No matter how few are present, let it be known throughout the class that there will be no delay on account of tardy members. Have the room bright and cheery—a map here, a picture by some of the old masters there, a portrait of Wesley, Asbury, or some pastor or other local worker, plenty of light and ventilation. The devil is fond of darkness and foul air. Many a class leader with his class packed into a narrow, ill-ventilated room has chastised them for their dullness or felt that he was himself under the power of evil from which he could not rise and has gone out depressed and sad, when a few cubic feet of fresh air would have been like the breath of heaven to quicken and invigorate leader and members. Preach and practice the gospel of fresh air.

Next to this is the gospel of cheerfulness. Open the meeting with a joyous, hopeful hymn. Start the service in the right direction. A funereal hymn, a faithless prayer, a lugubrious testimony, are a trinity of darkness from which it is difficult

to rescue a meeting. Have the songs sung in time. Do not allow them to drag. Mr. Wesley loved "swift singing," and every leader should see that appropriate songs are sung in a proper, helpful manner.

Encourage naturalness by precept and example. Be free in the expression of feeling. A laugh may be quite as religious as a groan. Discourage that solemn, whining tone which so many good people affect in the class room. Ask them a question in the midst of their testimony, and thus assist to break up the monotony of their tone and thought. An English preacher, Dr. S. Johnson, well says: "An exaggerated and unnatural solemnity often prevails. Thoughtfulness and reverence we must have, but these have no necessary association with whining tones, a sad expression, and humdrum exchange of cant phrases. We have seen a group of members conversing most brightly on the way to the meeting, but when they have crossed the threshold and taken their seats, they assume an aspect of grim seriousness as if they were about to undergo vivisection. Then the voice is pitched in an unnatural and melancholy key, they talk in tones of dejection and seem more like people at a funeral than at a marriage feast. And when the benediction is pronounced they swing back to heartiness, homeliness, and vivacity." Encourage every member to be himself and no other; to use his own language;

to let out the sparkle, as well as the solemnity, that is in him. Honesty of behavior will tend to honesty of testimony and an immense gain to the practical usefulness of the meeting will result.

Observe the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." For a leader to take thirty minutes for himself when there are many who wish to speak is to be guilty of theft. Neither has any member a right to deliver a homily that consumes the time belonging to others. If the leader sets a good example, he is in condition to admonish any member without offense.

An English author suggests that the leader occasionally call upon some member of the class to give his testimony by way of suggestion and help to some one who has spoken of experiences through which the other has passed. He says: "The difficulties and oppositions to the religious life of a workman could often be best met and solved by a brother workman; the cares and heart-breakings of some good woman could often be completely relieved by a sister in the class who had just passed through the crucible; the tendency to worldliness or to skepticism felt by some one in the meeting could be effectually curbed and counteracted by some brother who has just triumphed in similar circumstances. And if the leader, instead of feeling himself bound to speak to every member, would occasionally ask Mr. A. to reply to Mr. B., and

Mrs. C. to give counsel and sympathy to Mrs. D., what a freshness it would create, and how it would stimulate the members to thought, prayer, and personal sympathy for each other! Absent members might also be placed under the care of their fellow-members, and a report brought to class as to the cause of their absence, etc. Of course this method would have to be wisely controlled and guarded. But our leaders are men of common sense, they know each of their members, and can be trusted to steer the meeting clear of rocks and whirlpools. The dangers are less than would be supposed, for when godly people are met for religious converse they are met under the inspection of Heaven, and the most unlikely are often led to the utterance of the grandest things of God."

No matter what the provocation may be, keep sweet. A leader who has once lost his temper before his class is at a discount. His influence is seriously crippled, and only humble confession and months or years of self-control can restore him to full favor and influence. Many things which are not pleasant to bear will be experienced. His ability, experience, and motives may be questioned by those who are not worthy to loosen the latchet of his shoes. All this and more must be met in the spirit of the Master, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again.

It is a mistake for the leader to suppose that he

is to do all the work and give all the instruction. Each member should be drawn out to make his contribution to the general profit. Here is a great field for the leader. Dean Stanley, in his life of Thomas Arnold, says that the whole method of this great teacher was founded on the principle of awakening the intellect of every individual boy. Hence it was his practice to teach by questioning. He gave subjects which obliged them to read and think for themselves. "I call that the best theme," he said, "which shows that the boy has read and thought for himself; that the next best which shows that he has read several books and digested what he has read, and that the worst which shows that he has followed but one book and followed that without reflection." His questions were of a kind to call the attention of the boys to the real point of every subject and to disclose to them the exact boundaries of what they knew or did not know. It is true that the leader is not a schoolmaster, but he is in the highest sense, and in the noblest of all studies, an educator. The development of spiritual knowledge will greatly depend upon his wisdom. No archangel in heaven has a higher calling.

As the leader is prompt to begin on time let him be as prompt to close on time. Many a good meeting has been spoiled by being continued fifteen minutes too long. If the members know when the class will be over, they are far more likely to be

present. Enough will be said and done in an hour to afford subject for meditation through the week. It is better to close sooner than the class expected than to have them taking out their watches and longing for the end. Close with the meeting at full tide and allow no anticlimax at the last to dissipate the good impressions.

X

PLANS AND TOPICS

THE method quite generally followed in the earlier days of the class was to call upon each member in turn, and for the leader to make a personal response which was an answer to the testimony given, emphasizing, explaining, or differing from it. While this has passed into disuse in many classes, there is no denying that in the hands of a pious, sensible, and intelligent leader such a class was a glorious drill-ground for Christian experience. We shall never forget the instruction and exhortation which we received under such circumstances from a leader who walked and talked with God, and whose words were such as might befit a prophet. Given a soul aspiring after all the fullness of God and a leader quickened of the Holy Ghost, such a method of leading a class will be blessed of God now as of old.

Many prefer the method of making the speaking optional. With some it is optional only in name. Every person present feels the pressure to speak, and if they do not do so expect that they may be so singled out as to make a testimony almost imperative. In such an order the only thing optional is

the time of speaking; that they will speak at some time is expected. Others bring to bear no pressure whatever. The meeting is opened with song and prayer, the leader reads from the Word and makes his comments; then testimonies are in order and the meeting is closed when it is evident there are no more who wish to speak. Some members enjoy this kind of class and are regularly present, but would not go if they were expected to speak every night.

Some leaders have adopted with great success the conversational method. The leader gives an exposition of Scripture, or presents a theme or topic in a brief address, and the meeting thereafter is entirely informal. Questions are asked of the leader and by him. He seeks to draw out the timid, encourage the faint, and stir up the indifferent. We know of classes so conducted which are crowded and the members look forward with delight to the class night.

Bible classes of the experimental type are helpful, where the great characters of the Bible are studied in the light of to-day, and lessons brought out by the comparison of opinion and experience. The words of Jesus and the searching exhortations of the epistles are taken up one after another, and presented with their historical setting, all with the purpose of finding out to what extent and how they should affect the everyday life of the Christian.

Such classes are especially enjoyed by Bible students.

Lecture classes and Bible reading. We have seen such classes largely attended by ladies, when held in the afternoon by the pastor or some competent lay member. Many who feel that they cannot publicly testify, and therefore will not attend a class where testimony is expected, find great delight in such a class, where the matters of daily Christian experience are presented in the light of God's word by some deeply spiritual person.

The young people are often drawn out by the securing of several among them to present a brief paper on some topic that especially touches the life of the young in school, or home, or business. Then let the leader make such comments as will serve to bring out that which is most important, and answer such questions as serve to throw additional light upon the subject.

Among the occasional variations of the regular method, the following have been found helpful:

A roll call of the entire membership where all have been notified and those who cannot be present are expected to send their testimony by some friend or through the mail.

An occasional social service with refreshments at some private house. The social side is not enough emphasized in many classes.

A question box. Questions to be presented on

slips of paper without signature, and answered by the leader at the next meeting.

A missionary night, when reports shall be given by appointed persons of the work of the last six months in the foreign field. Get the facts from the missionary secretaries. Get facts that really amount to something and are not glittering generalities.

A temperance night, when reports shall be presented of the number of saloons licensed in the town or ward, and actual facts of their iniquity presented.

Good citizen's night, when local political reforms can be presented and plans laid to keep wicked men out of office.

City evangelization, when the question shall be considered, What can our church do to carry the Gospel to the unchurched? In the country the question will be, What can we do to reach the farmers and laborers who never go to church?

Charities and hospitals. What are we doing for the poor about us? What organized charities do we support? Have we done anything for the sick in the hospitals this year? Are the poor in our own church well cared for?

Schools and colleges. How many of our young people are in college and seminary? Have any revivals occurred? What is Methodism doing in the higher education?

Benevolences. Just what do our great benevolences undertake? How much money do they expend? What have they to show for it?

A night with the great hymns. Sing them and give the histories of the men who wrote them. The facts are easily obtainable.

A night with the founders of Methodism in England. Another with the founders of Methodism in New York, in Baltimore, in New England. Learn something about the heroes of Methodism and you will love her more.

To these might be added an occasional meeting especially for mothers, students, business men, etc.; a promise meeting; a want meeting; a pentecostal meeting, when the class will pray for the enduement of power for service, that through them the altars of the church may be crowded with earnest seekers after salvation.

Many of these topics are exceedingly practical and will serve to stir the class profoundly. The church should be interested in everything that makes for righteousness in the community. In the class these matters can be talked over as nowhere else. Facts and not theories should be presented, and the question often asked, What would our Master do under such conditions? Such facts will serve to draw and interest the young people, to get the old people out of the ruts, and stimulate the leader. The thoughtful as well as the pious will

find food in such a class and the entire church will be quickened by it. Other topics quite as good as those suggested will occur to every leader and thus all needed variety will be secured.

It should be remembered, however, that these suggestions are only made by way of variety, and are not recommended to follow each other unceasingly. The personal matters of Christian experience must ever constitute the substance of the class leader's concern. It is his to care for his flock, to lead them into the green pastures and beside the still waters, and he will have the supreme proof of his ministry and the abundant recompense of his toil in seeing them grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

XI

HOW TO FILL THE CLASS

IT is true that there ought to be such a desire to attend the class that no methods would be necessary to attract the membership; but taking people as they are, we find that the leader needs to be alert to encourage those who are losing their love for spiritual things and to quicken the love of those who are losing interest in the sober joys of the Christian life. He is the shepherd in charge of this part of the flock, and he is expected to see that the wayward are restrained and to induce the lambs by every proper means to keep within the fold. That does not mean that the class room is to be a hall of amusement, but it does mean that the leader by personal conversation, house-to-house visitation, judicious letter-writing, and proper social adjuncts will see to it that the individual members are assured of his personal interest in them and his desire to see them advance in all things which are pure and lovely and of good report.

"I have noticed that the firms which show the best goods have the best trade," said an observing visitor in our city. This remark will apply to class

leaders as well as merchants. The leader who brings forth from his treasures things new and old with thought and tact, who in the feeding of his flock brings juicy and nutritious food and is careful to put it low enough so that the lambs can get at it, will not be likely to be seriously troubled on account of their absence; but occasionally unusual methods may be adopted with excellent results.

We know of one class leader who sends out quarterly a card like the following:

DEAR CLASSMATE:

Next Friday night our theme will be "How John Wesley Found the Light."

Please come with us and compare his experience with your own.

Sincerely your Classmate,

A pastor whom we know well confers with the several leaders of his church and has each leader in turn send out a postal card with the following request signed by the pastor:

MY DEAR FRIEND:

It is my purpose to visit Class No. —, of which you are a member, next Tuesday evening. It will give me great pleasure to see every member of the class present. Unless detained by an absolutely unavoidable engagement I am sure you will gratify me personally by your presence.

Sincerely your Pastor,

Arouse interest in each member to increase the class attendance, and marvels can be wrought. Talk over individual cases. Lay siege to them. Let holy importunity wait upon a loving heart, and resistance is well-nigh impossible.

Another leader has connected with his class a band of young men who distribute a beautifully printed card with the following invitation:

Mr. — will be glad to see you at his class meeting on Wednesday night at eight, in vestry No. 1. The meeting consists of Christian conversation, Bible study, prayer, and song, and is conducted for one hour.

These are distributed among strangers and new members of the church.

It is highly important that the members should come to know each other socially, and many leaders have found it of great service in the maintenance of their class to have an occasional social at the house of the leader or some member of the class, where light refreshments are served, the grand old hymns sung, and short fraternal addresses given.

After all, there is nothing that proves to be quite as effective in building up and holding the attendance of the class as the personal and house-to-house visitation of the leader, to which we call attention on another page. Where this is possible all other

special methods may be dispensed with; where it is not possible some of the methods we have mentioned and others of similar character will be found helpful. Try one kind and then another. Use sanctified common sense. Pray mightily and work hard, that you may be able to say at the last to Him who gave you your high commission, "Here am I, and those thou hast given me."

XII

ABSENT MEMBERS

WHILE we do all in our power to bring to the class the members who ought to come, let it never be forgotten that there is always a large number in every class who cannot come and who ought not to be expected to come. When we in our hearts accuse every absent member of religious coldness, and ourselves of neglect and failure because of their absence, we are guilty of great folly. In every class of a hundred members it is probably safe to say that duty keeps at least half the members at home on any given night. They are parents who must care for children, or men whose business has made it impossible for them to be present. They are students and must attend to their studies, or there is sickness in the home. Some are aged and infirm. Others are called out of town, or some special emergency arises. It is fair to suppose that some good reason detains every member not present, and we should entertain that feeling until forced by certain knowledge of the facts to a different conclusion.

Whatever the reason of their absence, it is the duty and should be the happy privilege of the

leader to keep in touch with them. Some report of the last meeting should be sent to the absentees. A little sketch of the personnel of the meeting, any incident of special interest, the general outline of the leader's talk, or some impressive fact or experience—a few lines covering some of these items would be found very interesting to those who are habitually obliged to be absent. Even in cases of actual indifference on the part of the member such interest on the leader's part is almost certain to awaken interest in response.

In some classes it is understood that each member who cannot be present is to send a postal card or brief letter expressing his interest in the class and giving some helpful word of experience or some passage out of God's word. It can be readily seen how much such testimonies add to the profit of the meeting. It keeps the members in touch with each other even in their absence. It increases their mutual regard and their knowledge of each other's intellectual and spiritual life. It forms a bond of sympathy and love not easily broken.

A commercial traveler in one of our classes is accustomed to send to his leader early in the week a letter telling what he would like to say if he were present. Just before the class meets the leader frequently receives a telegram from him containing a greeting to his class and a reference to some passage of Scripture. After meeting the leader sits

down at his typewriter and in ten minutes has an interesting sketch manifolded which will gladden a dozen hearts when they find it in their morning mail. Such a plan as this has transformed absentees into regular attendants. It has brought a breath of heaven into many a sick room. It has sent a cheery note of faith to a discouraged mother and a worn-out housekeeper. It has made a man of business stop for a moment amid his cares and pray to God that he may be oftener reminded to seek first the things which are eternal, and women at their washtubs have been comforted to think that the leader had sent them the same kindly word which went to the millionaire. It is not easy to measure the good results which have come from this simple and kindly practice.

The leaders of some of our larger classes have divided them into tens, and members have agreed to be responsible to the leader for the whereabouts of their little company and in cases of sickness or calamity to notify him at once. In that way the addresses of all members are known, and in the city, where removals are frequent and distances great, it is in the highest degree important that the leader and pastor should be informed at once of any changes.

When it is remembered that more than one half the membership of the class is not regularly present the importance of some plan for reaching that large

number is apparent. No leader can perform his functions who does not as systematically care for the absentees as for those who are present. Their spiritual well-being is quite as important as that of the members he meets every week. Their needs are probably greater and their temptations more insistent and strenuous. If you value your Lord's approval, leader, look after the absentees. If the Master came to seek and to save that which was being lost you cannot do better than to follow in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd. Your first duty is to the one who needs you most, and if you know, as you are bound to, the burdens which the absentees have to bear and which make them absentees, if you know the temptations which come to those who are getting farther away from the holy things for which the class stands, you will not rest until you have done your best to help and to save them.

Methods are of small value as against a loving, tender heart. A good method prosecuted with indifference will be barren; a poor method or no method at all will accomplish something if only love gets a chance to show itself; but intelligent methods of arousing interest backed by prayer and loving attentions will stimulate the indifferent absentee and bring rich harvests of joy to the faithful leader's heart.

XIII

TESTIMONY VERSUS RHETORIC

MANY people object to taking part in class meeting through misapprehension of what that service really means. The essential qualification for testimony is experience. The clothing of the witness, the place of his birth, his intellectual attainments, his property qualifications, are never weighed in pure matters of fact. Ofttimes one hears of a *beautiful* testimony when the adjective refers not to the experience related, but to the manner of relating it, and an ordinary experience beautifully related seems to some far more desirable than a deep and holy experience related with faltering tongue. But the thoughtful will not long hesitate in their choice. Let every member of the class understand that sincerity—downright truthfulness—is the first qualification in any class meeting utterance. The cry is not, “Draw near and hear how beautifully I can speak, with what force of argument and eloquence of illustration,” but rather, “Draw near and hear what the *Lord* hath done for my soul.”

Dr. Buckley has said concerning the class leader: “It is not required that he shall be a master

of English. The most cultivated professor of English literature has either a weak head or a cold heart who would not be willing to sit at the feet of a man whom he thought more spiritual than himself." In like manner the most gifted man will readily be silent himself to listen to the testimony of one who has been face to face with God. It has been well said by Dr. Buckley: "Our religion is too outward: there must be a perfect balance between the inward state and the acts. It is well for us to examine our own soul's life. In the old days every fourth sermon was on self-examination." He who honestly examines his own motives finds the strength and weakness of his life and is in condition to bring valuable testimony for the warning or encouragement of others. P

But let it not be understood that he who has no record of spiritual victory or defeat to relate is therefore excluded from a testimony meeting; and above all things let it not be understood that one is to parade before others, as in a confessional, certain experiences of the soul which will not adequately lend themselves to words and are of such a nature as to be held forever sacred with one's soul and God. There is also for every quick and earnest soul the testimony of aspiration, an honest purpose within, to express which will stimulate his own endeavor and that of each member of the class. The world is to be won for God not on the field of

rhetoric or argument, but on the field of Christian testimony.

In a certain church in our communion was a learned judge who was not a professing Christian. The pastor, supposing that there must be some intellectual difficulty which prevented the judge from accepting the great truths of Christianity, preached a series of sermons covering those essentials, as he persuaded himself, and proving them in a manner unanswerable. To his unspeakable delight a few months afterward the judge made public profession of his faith in God and his desire to be received into Christian fellowship. With joyful heart the pastor hastened to his house and asked if the judge would be kind enough to tell him which one of his sermons it was which God had blessed to his conversion. The judge answered: "Your sermons were well thought out and fairly presented the argument for Christianity with which I was already acquainted. I felt, however, that I could answer you in a manner satisfactory at least to myself, and I am not aware that the sermons had the slightest effect in producing within me a desire to lead a different life; but one evening, passing another church in a storm, I stepped into a class meeting. I was not recognized by the leader, and I listened undisturbed to the testimonies. A gardener employed by one of my neighbors arose to speak. I knew that the manner of his life had been very

wicked, but my neighbor had commented on the wonderful change that had taken place in him of late, and now I heard him give in detail his experience. It was so marvelous, and withal so naturally and honestly told, that I felt as a judge that I heard a witness whose testimony I could not impeach. In some strange way that testimony laid hold upon my soul and I believe I am a changed man to-day, not because of the statement of theories, but from the force of a fact."

Do not fail to encourage the humblest soul who knows anything of God. Let him tell his experience as forcibly as he may, but let it always be understood that the experience is the first and only necessary thing; have that by all means, for experience, and not rhetoric, is to win the world to God.

XIV

HOW TO GET A CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

ONE reason why many do not enjoy an experience meeting is because it makes their own poverty painfully evident both to themselves and to their brothers. The first duty of the leader is to put every member of his class in the way to get an honest and vivid experience. Honesty is the first law of testimony. The leader must urge the prime importance of sincerity. Insincerity is a worm that will soon destroy the fairest Christian life. Do not try to make experience too rapidly. Life holds some things a long time in solution. Do not hurry the process. Some day some soul-convulsion, some test of life's acids, will precipitate an experience which will be tangible and solid, never to be dissolved.

You cannot work up a genuine experience. You must work it out. If there is growth do not shake the tree too violently. The fruit will drop when it is ripe. Do not countenance, much less encourage, exaggeration. The man who gives a hundred per cent testimony on a ten per cent life is doing a business too large for his capital. He will fail soon, and every member of his class will suffer.

Let it be ever remembered that the great crises in religious life can be counted upon the fingers of one's hands by almost any Christian. Encourage the idea of steady growth. Remember the fact which nature teaches in the orderly growth of blade and stalk and ear, but do not fail to insist that life always means experience. Physical life is a constant readjustment to our environment, and spiritual life is not otherwise. If a class member says, "I am conscious of no experience," he must not be told that he is spiritually dead, but he should be encouraged to see that there is an experience for him. He may begin on that experience at once. No man can long do business with God without being conscious of the moving of a power within him other than himself and making for righteousness.

We would point out to every honest soul four steps to be taken:

First, go to Jesus. There can be no peace in the soul until it has been consciously pardoned, and there is pardon only through the merit and atonement of Christ. The scientist is certain that life comes not by fortuitous concourse of atoms or spark from impinging worlds. It comes from life and only from life. Ye must be born again! There can be no growth until there is life. Ah, class leader, art thou a master in Israel and knowest not this thing? Your member may have been

in ten classes for ten years, but if he has not been born again the best you can do is to put comely decorations upon a corpse or set rich food before a marble statue. You prescribe like a physician when the gates of life swing open. Do thorough work. The difference between a robust, noble Christian life and no life at all may depend upon your actions. Now see to it that there is life. The sweetest cry a mother hears is the first faint moan of a new life that she has given to the world. Be not satisfied until you are certain that the Holy Spirit has done its work in leading the soul out of death unto life in Christ and another immortal is able to sing in the newness of life:

“My God is reconciled;
His pardoning voice I hear.”

By pardon we do not mean simply the forgiveness of sin, but rather all that follows a genuine conversion—justification, adoption, and all the delights of spiritual freedom.

Second, go to the Word. The best advice which men can give us comes only from men as frail and erring as ourselves. The teaching of men is of no value save as it illustrates and enforces the truths of the Book. Go, then, to the fountain head. Take the word of God. Now your friend will be in condition to love that to which he was indifferent before. When Southey had written his *Life of Wes-*

ley, and had shown his failure to appreciate the work of Wesley on its spiritual side, because of his own spiritual lack, a humble Wesleyan revealed his difficulty in a single sentence: "‘Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.’"

The Spirit will take of the things of God and make them luminous and blessed. In the words of Bengel, "Apply thyself wholly to the Scriptures, and apply the Scriptures wholly to thyself." Seek it not as a critic, but if you will criticise remember "it is an anvil that hath worn out many a hammer." Come rather that you may be nourished by it. And as you open its pages breathe this prayer: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." So coming, you will be glad to say with Beecher: "It is a living book shooting out rays of light and heat into all the world. He who only knows the print and type of the book, knows only a painted sun." No other book has the power to change human motive, to inspire a desire to be free from sin and develop righteousness.

Third, go to your closet. "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath." Because there is so little prayer there is little growth. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Does prayer avail? Who can answer that question? Certainly not the man who seldom prays. The man who talks most with God must know best.

Nothing makes experience as fast as prayer. God whispers his secrets to those who talk most confidentially with him. If it be true that "one could not stand under a porch in a rainstorm for five minutes with Edmund Burke without feeling that he was in the presence of the greatest man in Europe," what will be the feeling of the man who consorts with the mighty God? True prayer is not always importunity, it is communion. It is not telling God what we want so much as it is finding out what is his will concerning us. It is changing eyes with him that we may see things as he sees them. The thing to which Jesus resorted, both as the habit of his life and his especial solace in hours of crisis; the thing which took the sting out of the flame and snatched victory from the bony hand of death; the thing which has quelled the fever of life in all ages, is the thing that we need to enrich our experience and preserve our souls alive.

Lastly, go to the church. The church is not a place where those who think they are better than other people get together to congratulate themselves. It is a place where those who desire to do well get together to help one another in their holy purpose. Christianity is social. We multiply our experience by sharing it with others, and are ourselves strengthened by hearing from our brethren how God has blessed and delivered them. "For

none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Experience grows luxuriantly in the class room. The warm fellowship of Christian hearts is a delightful atmosphere, and we are fain to sing:

"And if our fellowship below
In Jesus be so sweet,
What heights of rapture shall we know
When round his throne we meet!"

If these four steps which we have briefly outlined be taken by any honest heart, there will no longer be a dearth of Christian experience. They will long for a chance to tell what blessed things are revealed to them and what great things are being wrought in them. May God hasten the time when every one of the millions of Methodists shall eagerly say to the world, "Draw near and hear what the Lord Jesus has done for my soul."

XV

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

A GIRL, being catechised by a clergyman on the creed, was asked, "What is the communion of saints?" She replied immediately, "A Methodist class meeting, sir." And in that she was right. In our feverish life meditation seems almost a lost art. Can there be anything more helpful to the soul than an occasional quiet hour where kindred hearts commune with each other and with God? The London *Methodist Times* in a recent issue had a discriminating editorial on the value of the class meeting as a place for spiritual communion, from which we quote a few sentences:

"The class meeting is peculiarly appropriate to these times. We strongly contend that there never was a period when it was more needed in the religion of Methodist life. How difficult it is to secure a quiet resting place! We are living in such a whirl that reflection is hard to exercise. We need a voice bidding us stand still a while. Such a voice is that of the class meeting. It affords an hour of meditation and prayer. Some of us think that if no word was spoken in the class meeting it would still be a precious means of grace. For this noisy

fevered age reflective means of grace are all too rare in the churches. If for no other reason the class meeting is a necessity; for many cannot secure the necessary rest in their own homes. How good it is to get an hour in a chamber of the temple, and there, with like-minded friends, ponder and converse and pray. We urge this aspect of the class meeting. It is a sanctuary of quiet; it is association of soul; it is a 'selah' in the loud, rapid psalm of life."

Meditation and communion are the only things which open some of the richest of God's mines. Some have never known the power of it, and for this cause are weak and sickly among us. The careless often wonder how some sympathetic soul brings rare gems to delight the spiritually minded. "Whence hath this man this wisdom?" The answer is to be found where unhindered minds commune with God:

"Mid scenes of confusion and creature complaints,
How sweet to the soul is communion with saints!
To find at the banquet of mercy there's room,
And feel in the presence of Jesus at home."

In such communion as this the fictitious distinctions of rank and wealth disappear. Nothing will serve to remind us of our common brotherhood like the blessed evidences which we see in these times of communion that the rich and poor alike are sharers of the same Father's benediction. There is

a fraternity here which we do not find in public worship, nor even in the larger gathering of the prayer meeting. It is a beautiful sight to see, as we often do in our class meetings, the millionaire and the laborer seated side by side, and, when the meeting is over, turn to greet each other with the warm light of brotherhood in their eyes.

“The great Duke of Wellington, when at the zenith of his popularity, was once partaking of sacrament in a village church. A rustic was observed to be kneeling by the duke’s side, when an officious warden asked him to stand aside and wait. ‘No,’ said the duke, gently drawing the man to his side at the Lord’s table, ‘we are all equal here.’ ” This is the same sentiment which the class meeting fosters, making it yet more tender and personal. One of the things which go to our hearts with comfort in these hours of communion is the conviction that we are not taken with any temptation not common to other men. We are walking in the same path which they tread. We find that our rich neighbors have also their burdens to bear, and we behold that it is the common lot for men to wear sackcloth, alike under homespun and broadcloth.

“Mr. Fearing, Mr. Despondency, and Miss Much-afraid are encouraged and strengthened, and Mr. Talkative and Mr. By-ends of fair speech are exposed and rebuked, while as Christiana listens to one of Great Heart’s outpourings she

exclaims, 'This is blessed; though my heart was lightsome and joyful before, it is ten times more lightsome and joyous now.' "

Rev. Simpson Johnson says: "The early Christians greeted one another with a holy kiss; that was the common practice. The men kissed the men and the women kissed the women, and the affection developed and cherished in the class meeting has made Methodists greet each other with hearty, sympathetic handshaking. It has created a brotherly masonry, and made Methodists one all the world over. We cannot afford to allow this brotherliness to decline or die."

The results which Mr. Wesley notes are also to be found in our time: "Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to 'bear one another's burdens' and naturally to care for each other. As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for, each other. And, 'speaking the truth in love,' they 'grew up unto him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.' "

XVI

THE CLASS LEADER'S MEETING

IN every church where there are four or more leaders, there should be held quarterly, or oftener, a meeting for leaders led by the pastor. Among the duties of the pastor prescribed by the Discipline and too often neglected is the following: "To appoint all the leaders; to change them when he deems it necessary; and to examine each of them with all possible exactness at least once a quarter, concerning his method of leading a class." It is also urged (page 55): "Let the leaders be directed to such a course of reading and study as shall best qualify them for their work; especially let such books be recommended as will tend to increase their knowledge of the Scriptures, and make them familiar with those passages best adapted to Christian edification. When practicable, let the pastors examine the leaders in the studies recommended."

It is difficult to see how these provisions can be carried out except by a stated period of conference. Every business needs investigation and report. Such a period to the pastor are the Quarterly and Annual Conferences. The leader needs such a time. The report from leaders called for by the

Discipline is seldom made in full and even in that no questions are asked concerning methods adopted or results obtained. If our pastors would have a quarterly meeting of conference with their leaders it would put new life into the classes. Topics might be carefully discussed; methods compared; difficulties stated and removed; special exigencies met. No Sunday school is complete without a teachers' meeting, where officers and teachers consider the special needs of the school and discuss methods and plans. Lessons are studied. New methods of teaching are suggested. In many places the teachers' meeting has been the resurrection of the Sunday school. Is not the work of the church class as important as the Sunday school class? Then shall we not use as much time and wisdom to make it succeed?

Since many of our churches have but one or two class leaders, besides the pastor, we suggest that neighboring towns or churches unite in a district leaders' meeting where a dozen or more leaders may come together and be mutually profited in the direction we have outlined. This is already being done in Philadelphia, in New York, and elsewhere. The results have fully justified the wisdom of the plan. Such a course would fairly revolutionize many of our country classes and, inspiring the class, would inspire the church.

XVII

SOME MISTAKES OF CLASS LEADERS

THERE can be no greater mistake than for a class leader to give the fag end of his time and strength and thought to the class. The work of a class leader is as distinct a calling as any other in the Church of God. He must be able to say concerning that work, "This one thing I do," before he will be able to accomplish any great or fitting good. He must look at everything from the standpoint of the class leader, so will he find grist for his mill. Reading and observation will fill his mind.

It is a serious mistake for the class leader to crack his whip and ply the lash. He is a leader and not a *driver*. "The shepherd goeth before his sheep and calleth them by name and leadeth them out." Kindness and not severity must rule in thought and life. If severity ever has place it should be like the cut of the surgeon, which is to save life, and should be done with the loving tenderness of a mother.

If it is a mistake for the member to harp upon old experiences, it is also a mistake for the leader to employ cast iron methods and stereotyped expressions. Get a new vocabulary. Dress up the

truth in new garments. Throw away the threadbare platitudes which were outworn a century ago. "Experience," says Dr. Gregory, "is the life blood of the church, and its unchecked circulation is essential to vigor and effectiveness." Let the class never lose its distinctive character as a meeting for testimony and experience, but do not think that these are the only things to be conserved.

Experience becomes of value as it is examined and classified by a trained and thoughtful mind. "Too much is made of doubts and fears as though these were a part of the Christian's legitimate stock in trade, instead of being really contraband goods to be seized and destroyed in the King's name."

Do not mistake a sigh for religious piety or a smile for an agent of the enemy. Even a good laugh may clear the atmosphere of some second-hand solemnity as unhealthful as last Sunday's atmosphere left in the church by a careless sexton to ruin a preacher's health and sermon. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked," and people are not blind. The leader cannot consort through the day with the world, the flesh, and the devil and come to his class at night in a fervor of holy zeal. He bears an unmistakable atmosphere. No warm declamation or pious platitude will supply his lack or move his people.

It is a mistake not to go from the closet to the

class. If it is a mistake not to begin on time, it is also a mistake not to close on time.

While we would not limit the manifestation of the Spirit in class in expressing the high commission from God, the leader ought to be as much in touch with God's Spirit as any member of his class and be able to discern whether the lengthy testimony is of God or from pride or self.

Said a class leader of sense to a member who was giving a long and profitless testimony with the declaration that God had commanded it: "You are quite mistaken, my brother; the Spirit has just told me it is time for you to stop." If such an answer shocks us, it is no more shocking than such a claim.

It is a great mistake for the class leader to rail at the church or to find fault with the ministry, either his own pastor or the ministry at large.

He cannot afford to be absent from the weekly prayer meeting nor to be silent when in attendance. Unless the service is crowded and he must deny himself for the sake of others, let him speak at the first opportunity and be a model in point and brevity.

It is a mistake for the leader to do all the work himself. No meeting can long survive with full ranks and interest where the leader takes three quarters of the time, and then says to the members, "Let us be very brief to-night." Do not make the

mistake of replying to each testimony or speech. Some of them are complete in themselves, and need nothing but your amen; others are of such a character that the less said the better. It is an unpardonable blunder to match a long and purposeless testimony with a longer homily.

Do not scold the members who are not there and accuse every one of spiritual apostasy who does not answer to his name each week. Do not in the prayer meeting inveigh against all other means of grace as compared with the class meeting, and do not hold up the attendants at the class meeting as the only religious people in the church. Do not think that the only place for prayer is at the beginning or close of the meeting. The best answer to many a testimony is an earnest prayer. The best person to offer it may be not the leader, but some one who himself is walking a lonely way, a Via Dolorosa such as his Master knew.

Permit these warning words, and may grace and wisdom keep you from all the mistakes which might otherwise mar your noble, faithful ministry.

XVIII

CHILDREN'S TRAINING CLASSES

DR. EDWARD JUDSON has well said, "The key to the hard problem of evangelization lies in the puny hand of the little child." Do what you must with the old man, his days are nearly over, but in the case of the little child, you have the incentive not only to save a soul but also to win the service of a life. The Church of Rome has set us an example which we ought to follow. Its children, as a rule, are far better instructed with regard to the doctrines of the Church than are ours. They know what they believe and why they believe it, and they can give a reason for the faith that is in them.

Our Church, theoretically, has a splendid plan for the training of children; it only needs that the plan should be worked. So important did the fathers of the Church consider this branch of church work that among the questions which the presiding elder is obliged to ask each quarter is this: "Have the rules respecting the instruction of children been observed?" Those rules are as follows:

✓ "The pastor shall organize the baptized children of the church, when they shall have reached the age

of ten years, or at an earlier age, when it is deemed advisable, into classes, and appoint suitable leaders (male or female), whose duty it shall be to meet them in class once a week, and instruct them in the nature, design, and obligations of baptism, and in the truths of religion necessary to make them 'wise unto salvation;' to urge them to give regular attendance upon the means of grace; to advise, exhort, and encourage them to an immediate consecration of their hearts and lives to God, and to inquire into the state of their religious experience; provided, that unbaptized children shall not be excluded from these classes.

"Whenever baptized children shall understand the obligations of religion, and shall give evidence of piety, they may be admitted into full membership in the church, on the recommendation of a leader with whom they have met at least six months in class, upon publicly assenting before the church to the baptismal covenant, and also to the usual questions on Doctrines and Discipline."

It will be seen that accurate and spiritual training is here planned for. Many pastors have what is called "the children's hour." In this exercise the pastor meets the children on Friday afternoon and has general interesting exercises with some incidental instruction; but the plan has been rather to entertain the children by song and story than to instruct them. "Such a meeting," says Dr. Glad-

den, "which keeps the pastor in touch with the children, may be very useful, but it does not quite answer the demand that the pastor shall be, in a spiritual sense, the teacher of the children committed to his care. The great Teacher, in his last commission to the chief of the apostles, laid upon him as a test of his affection and loyalty that he should feed the lambs of the flock. The lambs were mentioned before the sheep. The true shepherd's care must be first for the lambs. You must not only help to fold, you must feed them."

The success which follows work among the children is far greater than that which is experienced in any other field. So far from being temporary and fleeting, it is the most permanent in its results of any work which the pastor can do. So thought Mr. Spurgeon, and every pastor who has had experience in this work will agree with him.

One has only to inquire of the leading Christian workers of to-day as to the period of their conversion to be made aware of the fact that the majority of them were converted in their early youth. "Out of the seventy-one corporate members of the American Board of Missions nineteen were converted at so early an age that they were unable to remember it, while thirty-four were led to Jesus before fourteen years of age."

Chaplain McCabe was converted at the age of eight, and the present writer was received into the

church at the same age. Jonathan Edwards tells of Phœbe Barlett, whom he considered a suitable candidate for church membership at the age of four years, and his judgment was afterward confirmed by her consistent Christian life.

E. P. Hammond quotes, "Dr. Hart, of Connecticut, astonished us by saying that he was truly converted at two and a half years of age." Out of ten hundred and fifty persons converted in California the record shows less than one hundred and fifty converted after they were twenty years of age.

It has been the writer's custom in every church to form classes for the careful religious training of the children, and no part of his work has been more blessed of God. We have had in Hanson Place Church for the last five years from four to six of these children's classes in active operation. The pastor has kept in touch with them by frequent visits and has often consulted with the leaders concerning their management. Hanson Place has abundant causes to be grateful to God for the results which have come from her children's classes.

Forty years ago Dr. A. S. Hunt, afterward secretary of the American Bible Society for many years, appointed Sarah B. Bates leader of a children's class. The Church has reason to thank God for that appointment, and there are scores of men and women all over this land, eminent for ability and spiritual power, who became rooted and

grounded in the Christian life by the faithful labors of this elect lady. Those whom she trained are now training others, and they regard her with a tender devotion that is touching to see.

Later she became the wife of Mr. J. Davenport, one of the noblest Christian laymen in Brooklyn. Their home is a veritable Bethel.

She is still able to come to the pastor's class on Tuesday afternoon, and he gladly gives her a place in a trinity of noble women the other members of which were Susanna Wesley and Salina, Countess of Huntington.

When Mrs. Davenport, a year or two since, felt herself unable longer to conduct her class, it was passed into the hands of Mrs. Reynolds, an elect lady of kindred life and ability.

Anyone who desires to see a model class for the training of the young Christian may find such an one on Friday night, at Hanson Place, led by Mrs. George Smith.

The practice of observing Decision Day in our Sunday school, when a large number of children make expression of their desire to lead a Christian life, renders imperative the gathering of these children into classes for careful religious training. It is only thus that they will nourish their soul life and worthily develop it. While the class should be enlivened with joyous singing and happy incident, it will only accomplish its purpose when the leader

feels the importance of downright earnest work as between a soul and its God.

Very few among us have had a wider experience than Rev. Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, D.D., for many years at the head of the Sunday school work of our Church. Learning of the large number that gave themselves to Christ on Decision Day in the church of which he is now pastor, and learning that he had met them weekly for training, and had just received nearly the entire number into full membership in the church, we have asked him to give the results of his experience. Whatever difference of opinion there may be with regard to revival work, pure and simple, and its present place in the church, there can be no difference of opinion as to the importance of "The Pastor's Training Class for Young Christians" which he here describes.

"1. In the past, the principal means of growth to the churches was through the revival; when masses of people, generally outside of the church, attended special services; were wrought upon through earnest preaching and personal appeal; were converted, receiving a new spiritual life; and were brought into the church. But now it seems that the revival method is no longer successful in reaching the outlying, irreligious masses. The lines are drawn; between the church-going and nonchurch-going classes there is a great gulf fixed; and the people who need the revival will not attend

it. In the older sections of our country the revival may be set down as a failure.

"2. Yet to-day the church reaches more families and more people than ever before through the Sunday school, which forms the connecting link between the family and the church. One sixth of the American people are enrolled upon the register of Sunday school membership.

"3. Therefore, the great work of the church to-day is to win to Christ and to membership in the church those already under its influence in Christian families and in the Sunday school. It should be the diligent purpose of every parent, every teacher, every superintendent, and especially every pastor to see that as far as possible the young people of the church and the Sunday school are brought into the membership as professed and genuine Christians before they are sixteen years old.

"4. Those who come to Christ from Christian homes and Sunday school classes will not show precisely the same type of Christian experience as those who in other times came to Christ from the world and from sin. They will show less emotion, less excitement, less marked transformation of conduct; but under careful training will show a more symmetrical development of Christian character, and a larger percentage will remain faithful to their vows.

"5. For this training there should be in every church classes for children and young people. If possible the 'young people' and 'the children' should be kept apart. A good plan is to hold a class for the religious training of children in the afternoon of a week day and one for young people in the evening. The aim of both classes should be the preparation for full membership in the church by an early decision, by training in the Bible, in Christian experience, and in the system of the church.

"6. It is my conviction that the one person in the whole church to conduct both these classes is the pastor. He can give them dignity and importance; he can invite and urge the young people and children; he can instruct with a weight of knowledge and authority possessed by no other person. And it is more important for him to do this work than to do any other, for through it souls are won to Christ and his Church. Moreover, it is for his own interest as pastor to do it, for there is nothing that will give him greater influence in his field than to be the leader and the teacher of those who shall form the church of the future."

XIX

THE PROBATIONERS' CLASS

PASTORS and leaders are by no means agreed as to the best class arrangement for probationers. If only two or three are received the matter settles itself, but when from twenty to one hundred or more are received a serious problem is presented. To send them to the several classes where their particular church associates are or where they will meet a leader especially adapted to their needs has its advantages. There, too, they will hear the testimonies of others of long and varied experience and learn much from that. But after long study of the matter from its practical side, and many trials of each method, we do not hesitate to say that the best results have come where the pastor himself has held, for six months at least, the probationers' class. If the pastor does this it will give him the opportunity he ought to have to know the religious life of each one received into the church. It will also give the probationers such instruction in doctrine and Discipline as they need to have, and for which the pastor is usually better qualified than any of his leaders. He will know how much time should be given to instruction and how much to

experience. He will be able to give them such instruction as will make them intelligent Methodists, with a clear reason for the faith that is in them. It is preeminently the time for training, and the future life of the member in the church will depend in large measure upon the direction which he now receives.

Some regular course should be given to quicken the conscience in the matter of Bible study, family and private devotions, the sanctity of the Sabbath, the force of example in all matters of temperance, amusement, and general associations with people in social life. Where can the General Rules be so carefully explained or the obligations of the great benevolences of the Church so impressively enforced?

After six months of instruction and spiritual counsel, which will not be limited by the simple hour of class meeting, the probationers should be ready for reception into full connection. Many a probationer has been lost to the church because a busy class leader has been unable to see him. The leader has made the too frequent mistake of presuming that the initiative was with the convert instead of the leader. It is the shepherd who is to seek the lamb. It will not do for him to say, "I have cared for those who come regularly to class." It is his business to seek the straying, to encourage the diffident, to watch over the restive and dissatis-

fied; nay, to seek the one who is lost. He has not done his duty until he knows the exact religious condition of each new member and the cause of his absence, if absent he is; until he has done at least as much to hold his probationer as a faithful Sunday school teacher would do, by visit and otherwise, to hold a member of his class.

After the probationers are received the opportunity will present itself for the pastor to assign them to some of the existing classes of the church or to give the class a new leader, and be ready himself to take another class of probationers, which it is to be hoped will not be wanting each year in the experience of every faithful minister of Jesus Christ.

We recommend the course here described to every pastor, and urge its trial. If it is objected that the pastor is already overburdened, the answer is not far to seek. Anything that will put him in vital connection with the young Christian life of the church in its most formative period must be improved at any hazard. Some hewing of wood and drawing of water can be left to others and some social functions and outside matters passed by entirely for the sake of spiritual influence that will reach beyond the grave and outshine in permanence and glory the shining of the stars.

We are pleased to add to our own testimony the experience of some of the most successful winners

of souls and trainers of young people in our Church. In a personal letter to the author, the Rev. Louis Albert Banks, D.D., pastor of Grace Methodist Episcopal Church, New York, writes:

"In an evangelistic pastorate there is nothing more important than the probationers' class. The vast discrepancy between the number of probationers received in Methodism and the number of persons received into full membership, mounting up into the tens of thousands, comes about through the failure of multitudes of pastors to carry on probationers' classes with persistent fidelity.

"The probationers' class ought to be conducted by the pastor himself, and never be given to anybody else when it is possible for him to hold it. This is important for several reasons. First, if he won the probationers to Christ himself he has more influence over them than anyone else. Second, if he is fit to be a pastor he is better equipped to give them the instruction which they need during the first six months of their Christian experience than anyone else in the church. And finally, it gives the pastor an opportunity to become thoroughly acquainted with these new members coming into the church."

Dr. W. P. Odell, pastor of Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church, New York, gives us his experience as follows:

"It has been my practice for many years to con-

duct a weekly probationers' class for the instruction of the converts gathered during the annual revival season. The results have abundantly justified the wisdom of the plan and have more than repaid me for the required personal expenditure of time and energy. I have through this agency been enabled to become intimately acquainted with each individual and to give helpful counsel according to special needs. Both old and young have grown in knowledge and grace as together they have studied our denominational polity and doctrine. These meetings have been to me the most enjoyable of the week and have been attended by the probationers with a regularity which has proved their appreciation of the interest I have taken in their welfare and their own increasing delight in the things of the Church and the kingdom. I am persuaded that some of my best work for Christ has been done in the class room with the new recruits for the army. I can most heartily commend the custom as good alike for preacher and probationer."

Dr. John H. Willey, pastor of Nostrand Avenue Church, Brooklyn, is a firm believer in the probationers' class. He writes as follows:

"The probationers' class is an obvious corollary of this age of specialization; and the pastor is the presumptive leader. The Sunday school no more certainly needs a cradle roll, or a reserve corps,

than does the church need a class for beginners. The young Christians must have special instruction, and there must be a place where it can be given. New duties are to be learned, new experiences examined, false impressions challenged, and questionable habits discouraged. Those who come to us are to be made intelligent Methodists, as well as practical Christians. They must learn to give a reason for the denominational faith that is in them.

“Moreover, there are certain dangers in the conventional class meeting that may well be avoided. Our fathers were famous phrase-makers; the children have inherited the phrases, but much of the original inspiration has gone out of them. The ‘language of Canaan’ has thus degenerated in many instances to that which is little better than the language of cant. The children especially should be carefully directed while learning such speech; should be shielded as far as possible against the danger of lampooning it. Let us have some new phrases to describe this ‘new and living way,’ for many of the old ones have served their time and deserve an honorable discharge.

“It is also true that the mental attitude toward Christianity and the Bible has greatly changed. The Bible has been put on its own merits, and stands now without the bolstering of Church or tradition. It is a greater book than ever, but it is

not the same book. We do not any longer prove essential doctrines by isolated texts, nor decide important questions of practical life by a haphazard opening of its pages. There are problems that should be settled on the threshold of the Christian life. The young people who are coming to us now are intelligent and wide-awake. There must be a place to meet these new conditions and the pastor is the man to meet them. He has come to his kingdom for just such a time as this. The plea that he is too busy is invalid. Feeding the lambs is as surely a part of the divine commission as shepherding the sheep. The probationers' class is tomorrow. What Methodism will be is decided here. The minds that are shaped and tutored now are to be the master minds of the next generation. We must keep the arm of the Church about the young people for they will be the Church when the new age comes."

XX

THE EPWORTH LEAGUE AND THE CLASS

SOME recent editorials in our Church papers have held the Epworth League in large part responsible for the decadence of the class meeting. We hasten to affirm our belief that this is not the case. The class did not show a special decrease of attendance with the advent of the League, nor are the churches where the League is strongest least devoted to the class.

Others have said that the Epworth League furnishes the training once provided for by the class and hence makes the class no longer a necessity. In a personal letter to the author Dr. W. A. Quayle says:

“The fact of a Christian experience is the sweet truth of God. We are born from above. That truth must always have resonant proclamation. The class does this and therefore does good. The Leagues do this. They are a modern edition of the class and, therefore, to be rejoiced in. The meeting together of lovers of God to talk sanely but exultingly over their inheritance can never become an afterthought in the Methodist Episcopal Church.”

As a place for the expression of Christian experience the League certainly does great good, but we are sure neither Dr. Quayle nor any other student of Methodism will for a moment maintain that the League meets the purpose of training for which the class stands. Surely neither the president of the League nor any vice president assumes the duties which devolve upon the class leader. There is neither training nor subpastoral oversight. The League at best represents but a limited portion of the membership of any church and has even here but a limited sphere of usefulness.

We have been pleased to note that the present secretary of the League and editor of its official organ, the *Epworth Herald*, Dr. J. F. Berry, is the pronounced friend and advocate of the class meeting. His ringing editorials have greatly encouraged many class leaders in their efforts among the young people.

If there is any way that the League can better perform the work of religious development so admirably done by the class for more than a century, let it by all means take up the work even at the cost of the annihilation of the entire system of the class; but until it can do that which it was not organized to do and which was never contemplated either by its founders or chief supporters to this present time, let no friend of the League become its enemy by making for it a false claim.

We are glad to bear testimony that the best Epworth Leaguers we have ever known were constant attendants upon the class meeting. The real Epworth Leaguer, the one who desires a league offensive and defensive with every lover of the Lord Jesus Christ, loves his class meeting, for he finds there as nowhere else the fellowship which his soul loves. He makes a good Epworthian because of the training of the class.

We therefore make our plea to the Epworth League, Stand by the class meeting! Do you wish a spiritual man or woman to head your spiritual department? who so well fitted as he or she who has been trained under a man like those whose brief biography this book contains. Do you seek one to lead you in practical matters of mercy and help? take him from the number who have had months or years of practical training under a leader who has fired their hearts by his own noble example? Who will be as likely to make the literary department an adjunct of the spiritual life as one who has had the watchful care recommended in the chapter on "Young Men and the Class"?

You are to set the pace for the coming age. If the class is better loved a generation hence it will be because you love it and rally to it. Encourage the leaders of Methodism. You are loyal to your pastor and the church officials, be also loyal to that noble company who are trying to make the church

a holy and a conquering army. They will help you in the noble endeavor to keep your possession even-paced with your profession, and you will find in their company an inspiring fellowship. After the tragic death of Maltbie D. Babcock this entry was found on the flyleaf of his pocket Bible: "Riverdale, N. Y., Nov. 7, 1899. Committed myself again with Christian brothers to unreserved docility and devotion before my Master." Go to the class, find brothers like minded, and with them make such another consecration of yourself.

XXI

YOUNG MEN AND THE CLASS

IT is difficult for the Church to exaggerate the importance of laying hold of the young manhood of the age. It will never do this by restrictions and threats. It must intelligently examine the intuitive choices and longings of a man's life and offer something that will invite the choice and satisfy the longing. The robust, thoughtful, daring manhood that challenges every comer and tries the temper of every blade is not to be satisfied by what some one has called the "eternally feminine," which appears in so much of the preaching of some pulpits as well as dominates the pews of the church. There is a religion for the sorrowing and the sinning, and men and women at some period in their lives will need it alike, but there are phases of Christian thought and experience which are peculiar to the sexes, and every class leader, like a wise physician, should be able to make a true diagnosis of each individual case. There are, however, certain general principles to which the leader's attention should be drawn. There will be exceptions to this rule, to be sure, but they will be comparatively few. Emerson could write of himself, "I do not

know what arguments are in reference to any expression of a thought. I delight in telling what I think, but if you ask me how I dare say so, or why I think so, I am the most helpless of mortal men." But the spirit of the average young man is quite otherwise. He longs to investigate. He will argue and prove.

After reading the generalizations of Starbuck and Coe and comparing them with our own experiences we find all quite agreed in this, that young men are subject more than young women to definite periods of awakening and need expressly to be helped and guided in times of crisis. It is their nature to question traditions, and customs, and beliefs. The class leader who would be successful must understand and meet their need. Dr. Buckley says that the tact of a class leader in a period of religious crisis saved him to the Church and the Christian life. That class leader was Thomas Langdon, who has made young men his life study and is now at the head of the Bordentown Military Academy.

Young men must be treated individually rather than collectively. Women go more easily *en masse* and with the tide, but young men must be labored with patiently, intelligently, persistently. Dr. Coe well says: "Women respond to religion more feelingly and, in some respects, more continuously, but men more energetically and with a higher

potential of self-conscious reflection and choice. With women religion is more like the intuitive tact that helps them so much in all the relations of life; with men it requires the clumsier instruments of deliberation."

When a young man has come out into the light of conscious acceptance with God—and the majority of young men come to that crisis at home and alone—something must be given him to do. He must have not only a chance to work for better conditions in social life and to win his fellows to a better life, but there must also be set before him some definite plans for the development of his own life. Youth is the time of high ideals. The chapter which youth has written in the history of the world is the most stirring chapter in the book. To help form these ideals, to guide the young man's thought and life into the noblest channels—this is the splendid opportunity within the reach of the leader who has himself high ideals, who understands the character with which he is to deal and whose whole soul is challenged by his opportunity.

Nowhere does the personality of the leader count for so much as in dealing with young men. In answering the questions, "How are young men to be led to the Church?" and "How to reach the children?" Dr. A. J. Lyman, in his *Preaching in the New Age*, says: "These questions cannot be answered by mechanism, by devices, by patent pre-

scriptions. The preacher who would attain these ends by mere rules will fail. He is to attain them by bringing his manhood and his preaching into a certain tone of vivid sympathy with Christ on the one hand and the social life of the time on the other. At whatever cost to himself let him come down from his antiquated or factitious professional pedestals and stand with Christ and childhood on the bright floor of the new age!" To the question, What will rally to the Church a larger percentage of men? he answers, "A finer manhood in the pulpit."

Why do so few young men come to the class meeting? Because so few class leaders take their stand with young men, look through their eyes, feel as they feel, think as they think, listen to the same voices which thrill their ears. Only real interest in these problems of young life can give power to help in those problems. The chief interest which many pastors and leaders have shown in young men and women expresses itself in the indolent and unreasoning "Don't." That word may be the proper word to be used in any given case, but it must lie at the end of a reasonable process and not be spoken *ex cathedra*. The exhortation and advice of many a pulpit and class room is epitomized in that one word, and such a pulpit and class need not wonder when it is deserted by our youth. An eternal negative is not enough. Stand out of the

young man's path unless you can light him on his way. He will scale the dead wall you have built across his way unless you show him a better path leading into fairer vistas.

Why does he not come to class? Why should he? Have you put as much time into preparation for his instruction as the comic singer or reciter has for his amusement? Are you as much interested and as interesting in your work as is the actor in his? The young man will not long be deceived by an interest that is simulated, and only real interest will beget interest.

Concerning the best method for the training of young men in spiritual things, Camden M. Cobern, D.D., pastor of St. James Methodist Episcopal Church, Chicago, writes to the author out of his own experience, and we give his testimony entire. While many will prefer "class" to "club" as the less likely to lead to an independent meeting, which Dr. Cobern deprecates, all will agree that the form and method are best which produce the best results. Dr. Cobern says:

"With young men I find that a 'class' does not work as well as a 'club.' The average class will not draw the average young man, and, since the modern methods of conducting prayer meeting and Epworth League are taking the place of the old-time class meeting for young people, a new motive must be introduced. Of course the

best method is the method that works. In some communities a bright business man might conduct a 'class' in an up-to-date way and hold it. Sufficient tact, patience, energy, and talent would, no doubt, do this. Taking things as they are, however, I count it better to have young men form themselves into a club for religious conversation or Bible study, or for discussing the best methods of Christian work, or for personal or social improvement. At such clubs they would discuss the need in business life of honesty and truthfulness, or some other topic that should touch business habits or the life of men, such as 'Christian Methods of Advertising,' 'Can a Business Man Read the Sunday Paper?' etc. In such conversations, freedom of thought and utterance must be encouraged, and, if encouraged, a man will not be slow in giving his 'experience.'

"The living question of the day in regard to the Bible and its personal influence on man and the reasons for any decline of interest in it will be eagerly discussed.

"Very much depends upon the leader. It takes a man to reach men. If he has been very successful in business or in athletic contests it adds fifty per cent to his influence as a leader. The men must be put to work in preparing papers and discussions and in reaching other men and bringing them into this 'Searchlight Club' or into the prayer meeting

and church services. No meeting should be run as an independent thing; they should all have close connection with the regular services of the church."

It is a mistake to suppose that young men are not ready for serious and thoughtful work. While they are attracted by life and movement there must be something worth while at the end. The shallow and thoughtless, like the poor, are always with us, but the young manhood which is found in our schools and churches is a noble manhood and will respond to noble treatment.

Statisticians give us the percentages of attendance and membership of young men in the church, and the figures are not cheerful reading.

Something must be done to win them and to hold them to the Church. If our pastors and class leaders will address themselves intelligently to this they will be surprised to find how readily the young men will respond to kindly and thoughtful attentions. Form classes for young men. Give them what young men crave and need. Study each individual case. Let them see that you are putting time and thought into the work. They will be your friends. You will be their model and teacher. They will approach as rapidly as yourself the model of perfect manhood, Jesus the Christ.

XXII

HOW ONE CLASS WAS FORMED

SOME years ago Bishop Simpson was introduced to a lady who informed him that she had been thinking very seriously of uniting with the Methodist Church. "I am in hearty sympathy," she said, "with its doctrines and with most of its usages, but I am sure I could never enjoy the class meeting. To talk about the deep things of my spiritual life with others would be very repugnant to me, and then if I knew I was expected to rise and speak I think I should die of fright." Without taking issue with the lady the good bishop explained a little the principle on which the class meeting stands; and little by little he drew her on by question and answer to matters of experimental religious life. He questioned her as to the time and manner of her conversion, as to the circumstances which had been most helpful to her in the development of Christian character, and at last said, with a kindly smile, "Madam, you and I have had a class meeting together." "O sir!" she said, "we have had a most precious season, and if the class meeting is like this, my prejudices are gone forever."

The class to which we wish to refer was formed something after this manner. There was but one class in the church and that was led by a good old man who had long since fallen into ruts too deep for even the pastor to lift him out. There was little in that particular class to interest the young or the spiritual and thoughtful. One could tell before the meeting opened about what the leader would say. There was always the same old round of well meaning platitudes, but there was nothing fresh or interesting.

A young lady had attended the State normal school, and while there was soundly converted. On her return she took up work as teacher in the village. After a few weeks she called one night at the parsonage and said to the pastor, "I am only a beginner in spiritual things. I feel so much the need of careful training. In order to teach others I have been studying how to teach. I have now begun a Christian life; I wish also to benefit and instruct others, but I am absolutely ignorant of the great things which the Christian should know. I am like a child in the kindergarten. Would it be asking too much of you to give me one hour in the week when you would take up systematically the doctrines of the Church, and what is of even greater importance to me, explain in some practical way, so that I can understand it, the development of the Christian life in the soul; faith as applied to

life and prayer, and let me talk with you concerning the difficulties which meet me in my daily life, and ask you such questions as I am not able myself to answer?" The pastor's heart was in his work, and he said, "Nothing would please me more." The next morning she stopped on her way to school to say that she had seen her brother, who had joined the church a year before, and a cousin who was not yet a member of the church, and they had asked the privilege of going with her to the parsonage. The pastor said, with a great flutter of his heart, he should count it a great pleasure to have them come. On the night appointed these three appeared, and a little later in the evening the father and the mother of the young lady also dropped in. The father had seldom been present at the prayer meeting and almost never at the class meeting, but he said his daughter had told him what was to be the purpose of their meeting, and he confessed to a strong desire in his own heart to look into these great matters.

It is too long a story to take up the several themes as they were presented by the pastor and to produce again the lively fusillade of question and answer. But it is a matter of history that before a month had passed the young lady had induced one of her fellow teachers to join the little company, and her brother had induced two clerks, whom he knew intimately, to drop in a little after

eight o'clock, when the stores were closed. One night the pastor was unable to meet the little company, and asked the lawyer in the village who had come to them from a sister denomination not represented in town, to talk that evening on the evidential value of Christian experience. He became so much interested in the little gathering that ever after he was a regular attendant. At the end of six months the pastor said one night, "My friends, without any purpose at the beginning to do so, I think you will all see that we have in our weekly meeting nothing more nor less than a Methodist class meeting, performing the full work for which the class was designed. I have consulted with our good brother," naming the lawyer, "and he has allowed me to appoint him as the leader of this class. You will meet here in the parsonage as before, and I shall be present whenever it is possible. Together we will go forward in the study of God's word and in the development of Christian life."

We recommend this bit of actual history to every pastor, and we say to him, Find some godly young man or young woman, give him or her an empty class book, with instructions to find others—young or old—and invite them to the gathering until the blessed feast is furnished with guests.

XXIII

THE LEADER WHO DIDN'T KNOW

HE lived in a New England city and was as kindly a man as ever smiled a welcome to a late comer or shook hands at the class door after the meeting was over and said, "I am so glad you came. God bless you! Good-bye." Everybody loved him, and his pastor felt safe when he assigned a new member to his class. He knew that person would feel at home and would be profited by the meeting. He knew he would have a favorable idea of the hospitality of the church and be glad he had at last found a church that was warm in faith and cordial in manner.

Some things our leader knew right well. He knew that he had passed from death unto life. That is a good foundation for a class leader. He was doing business with the Master daily, and nothing develops faith in him like that. He knew the needs of men, for he was a man of wide experience and deep thought. He knew his Bible, and "his hand clave unto the sword!" He was no dilettante swordsman or sprightly fencing master. His excalibur was for carving the casques of great sins, and for that "his strength was as the strength

of ten, because his heart was pure." No one ever said a word against that man of God, but once he "did not know," and this was how it happened.

It was the monthly meeting of the leaders and stewards, and the roll of probation was called. The names of a mother and two daughters, all members of the class, were read, and he was asked if he recommended them for reception. He replied, "I do not." The pastor knew the facts of the case and was surprised at the answer. "Why," he asked, "do you not recommend them?" "I cannot conscientiously do so, as they have not been to class since the second month of their probation." It was remarked that simple absence from class was not *prima facie* evidence that probationers were living improper lives or were not suitable persons to be received into the church. Attendance at class is placed by the Discipline *along with* the prayer meeting and family devotion as the duty of the Methodist.

"Have you seen this family to inquire whether it was possible for them to come? Have you labored with them, or do you know the circumstances that surround them?"

Something had evidently been working upon the mind of the leader, and he answered, "I am sorry to say I do not know, but I will know about them and will report of my own knowledge at the meeting next week."

At the appointed time and place the godly man appeared, and when asked if he was ready to report he replied: "I am humiliated beyond measure. I found the woman at the washtub. Her husband is a drinking man. He is frequently abusive and always improvident. The daughters are obliged to help the mother support the family. Nearly every night they are compelled to spend in hard work. There is a little boy who is an invalid and every moment the mother can get she gives to him. I found her, in spite of all this, as patient as a saint. She has family devotions, led by herself, and, at their work, she and her daughters are accustomed to talk of spiritual things. I feel that she is my teacher in the things of God, and to think that I had not found her out and would not recommend her! It was only because I did not know."

The saintly man has gone to his reward, but never after that experience did he fail to keep in touch with every probationer assigned to him. May every class leader who has failed to care for a probationer because "he did not know," lay his experience to heart.

XXIV

AN OLD-TIME CLASS MEETING

I AM not one of those who believe that the former times were better than the present in any general sense. Centuries ago the apostle made wholesale charges against the church at Corinth that we should hardly feel justified in repeating to the deadest church among us as charges which we could substantiate. Wesley and Asbury lamented, with good cause, a lapse of faith in their day quite as appalling as any which saddens us. They desired, as our fathers did, and as we also do, to stir up the Church to its great opportunity and responsibility concerning the means of grace.

I distinctly remember that some leaders were dull and profitless in their remarks; that some members arose, turned their faces to the wall, and repeated, in a dismal, sanctimonious tone—very different from that used in town meeting or in trading horses—a pious lot of platitudes which meant nothing to them or to us. There was the sister who was “but an unprofitable servant,” “living at a poor, dying rate,” and “meant, by the grace of God, to continue;” the bluff, full-faced farmer who talked like a consumptive about “the

waste, howling wilderness of this unfriendly world;" and Simon Go-Softly, who spoke of his poverty as "the dispensation of the Lord to purify him," and that he would patiently bear his Lord's will—the lazy lout! I remember these, and many others like them, whose pet phrases I had heard so often that I could give their testimony verbatim before the meeting began.

But I shall never cease to thank God that I also knew the class meeting in its power, and saw what it could do when leader and members were true to its principles and traditions. I was born in a class leader's home. I knew the room where he went to pray. I heard his low cry in the travail of his soul, and when he came from that trysting place I bear him witness that the fashion of his countenance was changed. I trudged with him through the deep snows, his stout grip on my hand—a grip as warm as his heart—and I had ample shelter in the folds of his great broadcloth cloak.

The meeting to-night is at Uncle Henry's. What a man he was! From sunrise to sunset he was hard at work. His presiding elder said to him, "I never saw a man so fast for both worlds as you are." But he put God's work first, and God honored him. Two of his daughters married Methodist preachers, and a half dozen of his grandchildren are filling the first pulpits in Methodism. The old man sits by the fireplace as we open the

kitchen door. His place of secret prayer is in a grove of birches near the barn. There is a beaten path to it, and you may be sure he has been there to-night. His pastor once remarked the broken ground under a sapling, and asked if he had tied cattle there. Two things impress you as you enter—his homespun frock and his smile of welcome. He rubs his hands with delight as the farmers clatter into the room, knocking the snow from their cowhide boots. "Glory to God, see the troops gather!" says the old saint. A few chestnut planks are put in place to help out the wooden-bottomed chairs, and we crowd the kitchen.

They sing "Come, Thou fount of every blessing!" and then prayer follows. And what prayers they are! There is no giving of the Lord general information and advice. They are after something. They believe it is to be had, for they have had it before, and they will not quit asking now until they get it. I do not deny that there was some noise. They were so near heaven it was entirely unnecessary, but it seemed as if they had read somewhere, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." I do not at all justify the man who brought down his chair with such violence that the legs spread and every rung dropped out, but it was worth the price of all the chairs in the kitchen to see what happened that night.

A late comer had brought with him a man who lived ten miles away. This man had been under conviction for his sins for three months, and could get no light. He was a picture of despair. As a last resort a friend brought him to Uncle Henry's, for it was known in all the country round that the members of this class were past masters in the art of getting a soul to God. They crowded around the man like doctors at a clinic. A question or two, as clear-cut as Christ's words to Nicodemus, and they had the diagnosis of that case. And then the remedy—and the remedy did the rest! It fared worse with the devil that night than with the Spanish fleet at Santiago. Uncle Henry was so utterly beside himself with joy at the result that he shouted, "I feel as though I could leap over a troop or run through a stone wall!"

Some critics of the class meeting have said that it was a necessity then, as the people did not read. Not read! Shades of the Book Concern! Then why did the men and women of New England go out of Calvinism and become social outcasts? Who made the thumb marks in Adam Clarke's *Commentaries*, Wesley's *Sermons*, Watson's *Institutes*, Fletcher's *Checks and Appeal*, and the Lives of Mrs. Fletcher, Hester Ann Rogers, and William Carvosso? The fact is, there never was a generation of Methodists that read so much of Methodism and the Bible as the generation that became Metho-

dists at the cost of friends and preferment, and paid the price of social ostracism for acting up to their convictions.

The members of that old-time class are gone. The names of the most of them

“Have been carved for many a year
On the tomb!”

Some time ago I scraped the lichens and moss from the headstone of the saint of that meeting, and read:

“He sleeps his last sleep; his conflicts are past,
He rests from his labors in glory at last.

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While the lingering notes of his triumph I hear,
Hallelujah! I’m going with Christ to appear!”

We cannot wonder that the members who still live recall the days of their strength with holy joy, and grow impatient to see the chairs set once more, and to hear the old songs and see the old faces. You cannot overthrow their confidence that such a day is not far off. The old class meeting is gone, like the men who made it. No eddy of the stream of time will bring it back, but the power and the development of it the Church needs to-day.

XXV

GREAT CLASS LEADERS OF THE PAST

AT the head of the list of the great class leaders of the past stands the name of William Carvosso. For sixty years his success as a class leader and soul winner was marvelous. Thousands blessed him in his life time, and for a hundred years his simple memoirs have instructed and inspired the Church. The secret of his success in the class meeting was his love of it. It was a drill room to him, but it was something more, it was a spiritual battlefield in which holy battles were to be fought and victories won. Daniel Wise said of him: "Love is life, and it made Carvosso a lively effective leader. It led him into the class with an elastic step, frank, open, moistened eyes, hearty but tremulous voice, choice but fervent spirit, and intellect quickened by study of the word and by the Holy Ghost." With such a leader no class could be dull or profitless.

Whoever reads his diary will be conscious of warmth in his heart and moisture in his eyes. At Mylor Bridge he says: "I felt Christ was eminently present and precious. O Lord, make me more thankful for these brief manifestations of thy love

to my soul." A few years later he writes, "I think I never did feel my heart so much delighted in the work of meeting classes as of late." When he was seventy-five years old he wrote, "I never had greater pleasure in meeting classes, in laboring to prop the feeble knee, strengthening the hands that hang down, and press on believing to all the depths of human life."

His class meetings were places of conversion. "In one instance," says his biographer, "he labored for five successive hours with a person who had long been suffering under the power of unbelief, and at last his pious efforts were happily crowned with wonderful success." With Carvosso, as with every other faithful leader, the harvests reaped in class were very largely the fruit of seed sown in private. "Strike his personal efforts with individuals out of his life, and it is impossible to believe that he was the power he was in the class and the prayer meeting."

Of his method in the class meeting not very much is known. He was, however, a careful student of the word of God, and it was a sharp sword in his hand. He was a lover of good singing and he knew the Wesleyan hymn book by heart. He believed it alone contained a body of divinity which could not fail to guide the heart into full peace.

Carvosso was a beautiful example of the class

leader as subpastor. If his members were present at the class, well; if not, he saw them often enough to know their spiritual condition and watch over their soul's interest. He says in one of his letters to a class leader in respect to visiting from house to house: "When you were first fixed as a leader, I know it was your meat and drink to do it, for the salvation of their souls lay near your heart. If they discover less diligence and love manifested toward them in this respect, it is apt to discourage them and lessen their esteem for their leader. I wish you to look well to these precious souls put in your care that at the great day you may be enabled to say, 'Here, my Lord, are those committed to my care, not one of them is wanting.'" He exemplified this in his own life. Visiting the scenes of his first labors as a class leader, he says, "I rejoiced to see my old friends and companions, but was sorry to find that some in whose welfare I had felt much interest had grown weary of well doing. Constrained by love I went immediately in pursuit of the wanderers."

He was sixty-five years old before he learned to write, but his son says: "He wrote hundreds of letters, and yet I believe not a page or a letter was ever written by him on any other topic than experimental and practical godliness. He put to paper matter enough to fill many volumes, living to see his epistles esteemed and desired alike by the hum-

ble laborer and the learned counsel, the illiterate servant girl and the accomplished lady. What was far better than this, he had the great happiness of knowing that his letters did good to souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus."

Numbering his spiritual children by the thousands, surrounded by those whom his life had blessed, he came in peace to the end of his journey. Just as his breath was departing, some one remarked that dying Christians signified their happiness, after losing the power of speech, by raising their hand. Instantly the venerable patriarch lifted his left arm, and then let it fall back gently upon the bed. When it ceased to move the soul of Carvosso, most devoted class leader of his time, was absent from the body and present with the Lord. His eighty-five years of life on earth were ended and his life in eternal glory begun.

Next to William Carvosso in the list of great class leaders of the past stands the name of William Reeves. He was born in the parish of Cudham, in Kent, December 15, 1779. He was a journeyman coachmaker. He was not converted until he was twenty-nine years of age, but his consecration was so deep and thorough as to make him ever in spiritual things a marked man.

For twenty-seven years he was employed by one family, and he records that daily during that long period he sought one spot in the yard where, under

shelter of some planks leaning against each other, he poured out his soul in earnest prayer for himself, his wife, his class, the sick, the church, and the world, never forgetting his master and his family.

Ten years after his conversion he was made a class leader. As was the custom at that time, he had more than one class. In order to do his work successfully he felt called upon to make sacrifices. He found that "working from six o'clock in the morning to eight at night left his time to visit the sick and the absent members too short. To secure the necessary time he found he must give up six or seven shillings each week, but by faith in God and from love to souls he did it." His biographer well says, "A poor mechanic sacrificing from six to seven shillings per week that he might give the time to the Lord, is an act of faith and devotion rarely performed, and is worthy the consideration of men of superior social position, who will willingly give a subscription to a benevolent object, in order to do good by proxy, but who shun personal service."

Concerning the work of William Reeves as class leader the words of Mary Howitt are singularly appropriate:

"And first he taught them to respect themselves,
And then with goodness lured them on to virtue;
He hated sin, but the poor outcast sinner
Was still his human brother. This was goodness,
And this was greatness, too."

His classes grew so rapidly that it was necessary to divide them. Though repeatedly divided, they constantly grew. They were admirably trained, and in late years out of eighty members in one class more than seventy have been found to present themselves for their quarterly tickets.

The amount of good William Reeves did in the training of those who were to train others can never be estimated. Those who are familiar with English Methodism will realize from the following entry something of the value of that work:

“1824, June; Samuel D. Waddy, after meeting with me sixteen months, left to become a traveling preacher, November, 1825.”

The following record will show his care for his flock and the honor his Lord and Master put upon him:

“December, 1832.—The number of those who have been convinced of sin, those who have been converted, the backsliders restored, and the happy deaths in my classes this last year:

Convinced of sin.....	60
Found peace	40
Backsliders restored	6
Happy deaths	2

And many now enjoy perfect love.”

William Reeves used printer's ink like a successful man of to-day. He advertised his classes as

other men advertise their trade. It was his business to lead men from sin to righteousness. One of his announcements reads, "The time and place where my classes meet: 1. Sunday afternoon at half past two o'clock. Free seats, Lambeth Chapel. 2. Sunday evening, after preaching, in the same place. 3. Wednesday evening at seven o'clock in the lower vestry. 4. Friday at the same time and place. William Reeves."

On the back of the card was written, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

He went out into the world to get recruits for his class. He said, "Only while I am adding to my heavenly graces I am kept alive and growing; so I daily prove that only while I am getting new members to my classes we keep alive the old members." What an example for the leaders of to-day. William Reeves' success was not strange, and he deserved it.

A leader, he held, should be the first and the last in the class room. At the close of the meeting he took his position at the doorway, grasped each member's hand in turn, and asked the divine blessing upon each.

Some said that his classes were too large, and that it was impossible that the ends of class meeting could be answered, but, he asks, What is the end of class meeting? 1. That the members may be

instructed to know their lost state by sin. 2. That they may be led into a state of justification by faith. 3. That they may be led on to perfect love.

And then he makes his humble boast: "Now let me say to my beloved friends, and I do indeed say it 'as a fool,' let them take out of that class twenty members, whom they will, and compare them with any other twenty members from another class in Lambeth, and see if they do not come up to the above standard as fully as those who have been fed with the finest wheat, although we have been, like Daniel and his three brethren, fed upon pulse."

He sent his members to the Word of God, and often held a Bible class, giving them a month to prepare for the subject.

He made his members recruiting officers for the class: "Be sure you tell all your relations and friends at what time your class meets," said this faithful leader.

He made such careful preparation for his work that his words were condensed to the fewest moments. He was never in haste, always orderly, and never dull, rarely took more than ten minutes of the time himself. His addresses related both to experience and to practice. "He labored most diligently," says one of his members, "to instruct us in doctrine, in church discipline, and every matter necessary to make us intelligent Christians."

He kept a careful record in his class books of his

visits upon his members. From 1825 to 1852 nearly thirteen thousand visits were set down, an average of four hundred and fifty a year. So faithfully was his visiting done that when he passed away this conversation took place in the street: "Dead!" said a Lambeth Walk shopkeeper—"who is dead?" "Mr. Reeves." "What, the little old man with the umbrella, that was always going about visiting the sick?"

Thus briefly have we sketched the work of Father Reeves, whose blessed work will bear rich harvest as long as the world stands. He ceased at once to labor and to live, but his influence for good still goes on. Most of his methods were methods good for all time, and most of his successes can be duplicated to-day. One of his friends thus summarizes his work: "He never went to class without earnest preparation, a careful selection of hymns, Scripture references, and, apparently, topics for prayer. He never permitted absence without knowing the cause, or immediate visitation to ascertain it. To him the loss of members was a source of humiliation—a matter for self-abasement in his classes. He was ready for any service, and rejoiced in all. His Bible was his teacher; prayer his element, his duty, his delight. Consecrating his time, his soul, his energies, unremittingly, unreservedly, to God and his cause, no wonder he was blessed."

Among the many class leaders that were famous in the days of Wesley, William Bramwell deserves a place. It was he to whom Wesley said on the occasion of his introduction to him, "Well, brother, can you praise God?" Mr. Bramwell replied, "No, sir." Mr. Wesley, lifting up his hands and smiling, said, "Well, but perhaps you will to-night." And indeed, so it came to pass, for that very night he found the comfort he had lost and his soul was enabled to rejoice in the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

The life of William Bramwell is exceedingly interesting reading for any spiritual class leader, but because his usefulness was especially seen in the work of a local preacher and later as an itinerant preacher we shall not consider in detail his labors as a leader. Read his life and catch his spirit.

Some years ago the writer attended services in St. James Hall to hear Mark Guy Pearse, the famous Wesleyan preacher, associated with Hugh Price Hughes in his great work at the West End in London. At the close of the service we expressed the pleasure and profit which we had derived from the reading of his works, and especially mentioned *Daniel Quorm*.

"Ah," said the preacher, his face lighting up, "I am glad if Daniel is doing good in America; I knew him well, and loved him."

Though we do not have in *Daniel Quorm* an exact biography of any class leader, his duplicate was to be found in scores of chapels throughout England a generation and more ago. His delineator spoke truthfully when he said, "In hundreds of towns and villages men of the humblest position are doing the highest work of the church in the Sunday school, in the pulpit, and in the society class."

"My old friend Daniel Quorm—Brother Dan'el, as he was called—was the village shoemaker, the Methodist class leader, and the society steward. As hard-headed as the rounded lapstone on which he hammered all day long, as sharp and quick as his shining awl, as obstinate in holding his own as his seasoned shoe leather; yet, withal, Brother Dan'el had a heart so kind, so wise, so true, that, like the hammer, it only beat to do good, and, like the awl and thread, it was always trying to strengthen some poor soul that had got worn in the rough ways of life."

What a life of consistent devotion he lived. His religion was certainly theological; fiercely so sometimes, as even Fletcher could be in his polemics; a garrisoned city, full of defenses, and sharp definitions, of points and proofs.

What a world of quiet humor lay in him, and a world of shrewd common sense.

He sat there in his little shop, always busy, ever,

too, with a book before him. Solid books they were, Wesley's *Notes* and *Sermons* and *Journals* occupying the chief place. Only one dearer than these, and that was his mother's Bible.

Above everything else, my friend Dan'el was a class leader. He was good at making shoes or mending them; good at doing a bit of garden in front of his place; good at an argument, and many a man stepped into the shoemaker's shop for a talk; good at a sermon, as appeared from his appointments on that huge circuit plan. But it was as a class leader that you had Dan'el at his best. Pithy, plain common sense, with a depth of pity and tenderness in his soul. So wise, so simple, so practical. No one can read Daniel Quorm and watch his home thrusts at the sins and weaknesses of our poor human nature without being ashamed of his failings. Hear him as he punctures some old platitude which has done service in the class meeting for a hundred years. "How was Jim Tregoning gettin' on? Well, he feared he was only a slow traveler heavenward. But there—he had many troubles and trials—fightin's without, fears within—and he hoped that his motto was slow an' sure, slow an' sure."

The little eye twinkled—and yet there was a tone of pain and grief in the reply.

"La, Jim, whatever do'e mean! 'Slow and sure, slow and sure.' Always the same, never no for-

warder, never no backwarder, but always a stickin' in the same place. I'll tell 'e what, Jim. Do 'e get out o' this here way. *Strive* to enter in at the strait gate; but goin' along so slow you'll be sure not to get through un. Slow an' sure! Yes, sure to be too late! 'Tis what the folks said when they was a comin' to the ark; but the floods came quick and sure 'pon them before they got to the ark, and slow an' sure was drowned. Serve him right, too. The virgins were slow and sure when they were a-gone to buy oil for their lamps, and when they come back the door was shut. Slow an' sure!

"My dear Jim, there ben't no such thing as this slow and sure o' yours. When the top do spin slow he's sure to come down. 'Tisn't the way the angels told Lot. 'Escape for thy life, tarry not in all the plain!' and I don't think we shall get off easier than he did. Time is swift and sure, Jim; and death is swift and sure. And then the love of Jesus is swift and sure. Ah! bless the Lord, how swift and sure that is you know, Jim, as well as the rest! 'When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran—ran!' And Dan'el's voice spoke with a tenderness that brought the tears to every eye. "No creepin' then, or walk-in', either. He 'ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.' Ah, bless the Lord; that's his way always—and his way be always best!"

Dan'el had no patience with those who sat down

supinely under the ills of life and tried to comfort themselves in their indulgence by saying, "It's the Lord's will."

"I can't abide to hear folks talkin' about it; puttin' down everything that is sad, and bad, and miserable to be the Lord's will. It ben't the Lord's will, but just our own folly very often that makes the Lord deal with us a bit hardly. Fancy Eve a-comin' out of paradise, and when the earth begins to get covered with thorns and briers, and Adam has to go earnin' his daily bread by the sweat o' his brow, she says, 'Well, you know, it's the Lord's will, and we must bear it!' Not a bit of it. They knew that the Lord's will was paradise. The Lord's will was all the fruit, and flowers, and beauty of Eden. It was right against the will of their Father that there should come these thorns and things, and weariness and sorrow; only it was just what their sins forced the Lord to do."

It will be helpful to us to listen to Dan'el's notion of a class meeting.

"But talk about class meetin's, and people not comin' to 'em; why the reason is pretty much the same as I was a-tellin' Bob Byles's wife the other day, that it wasn't all his fault that he was at home so little and at the public house so often. If she kept a bright fireplace, and a snug corner, and a pleasant smile for him at home, he would be tempted oftener to stay at home. We leaders must

keep the place bright and cheerful and attractive if we want to keep the members. Why, I should every bit as soon think o' goin' to class with the wax an' the grease on my hands, as soon think o' goin' with my apron on and in my shirt sleeves, as think o' takin' all my cares and worries. I get away first of all and lose all my own fears and troubles in the lovin' care of my heavenly Father. I get my own heart put into tune, and then the rest'll take the right pitch from me. And then with the fire burnin' I get away to meetin'. We always begin with a good, cheerful hymn—one o' them that do stir up your soul, and a good old tune that you can sing without thinkin' about it, because you do know it so well. Give me a 'trumpet meter' to 'Arise, my soul, arise!' or dear old 'Jerusalem,' to the hymn—

'My God, the spring of all my joys,
 The life of my delights;
 The glory of my brightest days,
 And comforts of my nights!'

Bless 'e, why, by the time you're gone through that, and had a bit o' downright earnest prayer, the fire is burnin' in every heart, and you're all aglow with holy joy. No fear o' freezing the tender lambs to death then; more likely to warm the old ones up to shoutin' pitch. When I hear some folks talk about the class meetin's as they do, I wonder whatever the leaders can have been about for to

let 'em get such notions as they have got. I know faults are thick when the love is thin; and standin' water 'll breed plenty o' nasty things without anybody goin' nigh it. The old mill wheel'll creak and grumble when the river be low. But you can't wonder that folks don't like class meetin's if there be nothing for 'em when they do come; neither meat, nor drink, nor fire, nor a nice, hearty welcome.

"We sha'n't get folks very often to come into a desert place and rest awhile, if we, like the disciples, forget to take bread. If we want the folks to come we must have it now as it was then, and as it always will be when the blessed Master be with us: 'They did all eat, and were filled.' All—nobody was forgotten. It was a big class meetin' that, but everybody got a bit; not an old woman was shut out by the crowd; not a hungry child was passed by because it was afraid to ask; not a little maid but got a bit. That be just what I do want my class meetin' to be; a bit for all round, old and young, weak an' strong. A bit for everybody. And, bless the Lord! more than a bit, too. 'They did *all* eat;' but that's only half of it, only the beginnin'—'They did all eat, and were filled'—*filled!* Ah! that's just like him—filled. He don't give us a taste and leave us hungerin' for more. He '*satisfieth* thy mouth with good things.' 'They did all eat, and were filled.' Now that's a class meetin' 'zactly to my mind."

Dan'el's quaint and homely talk will be a spur to many a careless class leader, and with the gleaming of light upon a dark way, where some have sadly stumbled, the heart will be warmed by the tenderness which looks out of his old wrinkled face, and those who have culture and "understand all mysteries and all knowledge" will be pointed to the Father's love, which is better than these.

When the fire burns low, read *Daniel Quorm*.

XXVI

GREAT CLASS LEADERS OF TO-DAY

BISHOP MALLALIEU, formerly pastor of Bromfield Street Church, Boston, sends the following most interesting sketch of one of Boston's famous Methodists:

"Jacob Sleeper was born in Belfast, Maine. In early life he came to Boston, where he lived and died. He was a Boston millionaire when millionaires were not numerous. He held high offices in the city, the State, the church, and would have graced the halls of Congress whether in the House of Representatives or Senate. He was preeminently a courtly gentleman. For more than fifty years he was the superintendent of the Bromfield Street Sunday School in the days of its greatest strength and prosperity. For almost if not quite as long a series of years he was both trustee and class leader of the same church.

"In the later years of his life he held the meetings of his class in his own spacious parlors. His members were not selected by him, but assigned in the regular manner, with special reference to their convenience of location. They were not the old, experienced, and saintly

members of the church, but they came from all classes and all ages. There were no Epworth League meetings in those days, and so the young and old, the men and women, tried and faithful for many years, and the young beginners in the Christian life—all classes were alike welcome to his home, the poorest as really as the richest, the least cultured as the most highly cultured. The meetings were weekly home-comings and seasons of rich spiritual intercourse.

“One special feature of these meetings was their cordial informality. It was entirely optional with each whether in speaking one should stand or sit. Sometimes the members would be called on in regular order, and at other times the meeting would be open for volunteer remarks. Sometimes each would be called on for a favorite or especially helpful passage from the Bible or a verse or two from the hymn book. There was always a brief Scripture reading and prayer at the opening of the meeting, and sometimes special prayers would be offered if the occasion seemed to require such service.

“The influence of these meetings upon the younger members was especially pronounced. First of all, the class leader won their confidence, and in due time their love, and in the later years of his life their veneration, so that mind and heart were alike open and receptive to all the wise counsels,

tender warnings, timely instructions, and inspiring encouragements that were patiently and constantly imparted. It may truthfully be said that the lives of hundreds of young people were enriched, ennobled, and made beautiful and influential for good by these meetings.

"The class leader is dead. He has gone to his reward. But his work endures. Would that thousands of our well-to-do people, men of wealth and influence, might follow the example of Jacob Sleeper!"

Rev. Benjamin M. Adams, of the New York East Conference, himself one of the greatest men among us in spiritual things, gives the following graphic and inspiring sketches of the great leaders he has known:

"Some of the class leaders I knew sixty years ago were evidently put in place because 'they had companied' with the disciples, 'and went in and out with them,' as Matthias did in Acts 1st, and, like him, were elected to fill in with. They came near killing me dead, but the rule was strict, and I went on principle as a Methodist, and believe to-day it was the knot on the end of the rope that kept me from falling off.

"There were exceptions. My father was a great class leader for many years in Stamford, Conn. His class was the refuge for the troubled and perplexed. He'd take time to unravel the toughest

tangle of a soul all enmeshed in Calvinism. Never mind how big the class, or how long it took. Almost always there was a shout in the camp as the 'day dawned and the shadows fled away.' The shouters who have not long since been suppressed in Stamford were the successors of the old band who were led to liberty in General Sands Adams' class.

"John Sudlow, in Second Street, New York, was a great class leader. He was a successful business man. Rather fine looking, of easy gentlemanly address, full of common sense, a good singer; but the secret of his popularity as a class leader lay in the personal interest he took in everybody. The '*undershepherd*' idea didn't seem to have dawned on him. He was responsible for that soul, first, last, and always. He turned everything turnable to the advantage of that person, never mind how poor. How he poured out himself in his class meetings, and yet never long; it was not hoisting a flood gate; but the entire dam gave way, and everybody went away feeling like a well-watered garden.

"He was called the greatest class leader in New York. He certainly was one of the best, and certainly a remarkable exhorter. Few ministers were more skillful in sending home the great facts of redemption and the needs of the soul.

"Samuel Halsted, of the old Allen Street Church,

New York, was a remarkable class leader. It was as impossible for a gloomy saint to stay under the shadow of Mount Sinai in that class room when Uncle Sammy was leading as for a dewdrop to refuse to shine when the sun strikes it of a June morning. He was joy incarnate.

"At the St. Denis Hotel, in New York, where he lived for some years, a friend came to see him from Philadelphia, and inquired at the office for Mr. Samuel Halsted. The clerk didn't know such a man. He called a porter who had long been on the premises. He didn't know such a gentleman. Another man was called. He didn't know any such person. The Philadelphia man described Brother Halsted. Suddenly the first porter said, 'O, its Old Hallelujah!' That was the name he wore in the St. Denis Hotel.

"He carried climate with him, even that of the New Jerusalem. His funeral was no more like a funeral than Fourth of July is like fast day. It was a love feast. He didn't look like a dead man. His hair was black as a coal, though he must have been eighty or hard by it; face rosy and full and every appearance of abounding youth. The old Pacific Street Church was crowded with people who had been members of his class. He was the leader of the 'New York Praying Band' which in '57 and '58 did wonders in the churches.

"He was often urged to take a license to exhort

or preach. 'No,' said he, 'I have only one ambition; that is to be a good class leader.'

"Samuel Halsted's secret was his abounding joy, a cheerful view of the whole situation. Hundreds and perhaps thousands were won to Christ by this man whose highest ambition was to be a good class leader.

"In great contrast to these in many respects was Sylvanus Hallock, of the old Duane Street Church, New York. His class was held Sunday morning at nine o'clock. He had the three great qualities of a class leader: common sense, a good knowledge of the Bible, and religion. He seemed to have intuitive knowledge of everybody who came in—'strangers of Rome, Jews, proselytes.' No one ever knew who he'd call on to speak. Might be a man or woman he'd never seen before, but it was always the right one.

"Brother T——n was a lumberman on the headwaters of the Delaware River. He had sold his lumber product to a firm in New York for \$7,500. The dreadful panic of 1857 came on. Brother T——n hadn't received his money. Came to town late Friday night, and Saturday morning made his way to the office of the firm indebted to him. The gentlemen told him they were 'hard up,' were 'talking of suspending payment,' 'many building firms indebted to them had failed.' They were 'very sorry,' they'd 'had pleasant dealings with

Mr. T——n, he wouldn't lose his money, they'd do the best they could.' T——n went down town to see his lawyer. That gentleman counseled against putting an attachment on the property of the company, as they were solvent, but embarrassed. T——n went back to his hotel. There were fifteen or twenty men in his employ, all waiting for their money, and other obligations pressing him which he didn't see how to meet. He had his supper, wrote a doleful letter to his wife, said his prayers, and went to bed, but didn't sleep much. After breakfast Sunday morning he sauntered into the office of the hotel, and there hung the big card of the old 'Duane Street Methodist Episcopal Church' with the services duly and plainly printed. (It was a downtown hotel.) 'Class meeting at 9 o'clock Sunday morning.' T——n started, was five minutes late, but the room was full and 'the power' on. 'Father Hallock' eyed T——n as he took his seat and called on one and another to speak. Suddenly he called on a gentleman sitting opposite T——n, tall, well built, and every way a good looking man. He began with: 'Three months ago, I had a lovely wife, three beautiful children, and supposed I was worth seventy-five thousand dollars. To-day my wife and children are all in their graves, and my entire property is swept away, but such are the resources I find in God, through Christ, I can say, "Though he slay me, yet will I

trust in him." He cannot fail. He does not. Never have I known him as I know him now. To him be glory !

"While he was speaking, a mighty influence swept through the room. Tears, sobs, and suppressed shouts all around. T——n sat there thinking, 'How ungrateful I am. Here I've a good farm, a comfortable home, a good wife, four nice children, and gloomy as an owl, while there's a man swept clean, and rejoicing in God. I'm ashamed of myself.' Father Hallock didn't get all the way round. He hardly ever did. Brother T——n wasn't called on. He went upstairs and heard a sermon on 'casting all your care upon Him, for he careth for you.' A revival was going on in the church. Several people shook hands with Brother T——n. He ate a hearty dinner and had a good sleep in the afternoon. The morning class had helped Brother T——n amazingly. He was on hand at six o'clock evening meeting and the evening preaching. Several were at the altar for prayers. He went back to his hotel, and when he got down on his knees to pray, broke out in praise to God, his burden all gone. He 'slept like a stone.'

"On Monday morning he awoke in the spirit of praises. At half past nine he was at the office of the lumber firm. The head man said: 'Mr. T——n, we have been dealing with you a good many years, and you have always treated us well.

We are sorry things are hard just now. We have seven thousand dollars in the bank. We have concluded to offer you that for your bill. If we can, we will pay the rest. Will you take it?' Brother T——n, in telling it afterward, said, 'I could have leaped for joy.' He took the check, drew the money, and was on his way home at noon, blessing God for Father Hallock's class and the victory he had won. After a year or so the remaining sum was paid.

"In 1869 the pastor of the Central Church, Brooklyn, received a note signed by some dozen people, asking that Samuel Adams be appointed class leader. The young man insisted he had 'no gifts,' 'no grace to speak of,' and the usual stock excuses in use since Moses set the example as he stood barefoot before the burning bush all came in play, but he didn't refuse, and was appointed. He took to prayer; made up his mind to make it a success if possible. Got out a pretty card. On one side was

CENTRAL METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

CLASS NO. VI.

Samuel Adams, Leader.

Room No. 4. Tuesday Evening, 7:30.

On the other side was

LIBERTY OF SPEECH

or

SILENCE.

“The room was full the first meeting. After singing, he called on a brother to pray, and he made his opening address, duly reported to the pastor, as follows: ‘Friends, I understand I am here because you have requested my appointment. I shall try to do my duty as I see it. I am sure I shall not be able to reply to all of you, as is the fashion of class leaders, because I shall not be able to think what to say. I shall inquire, as the Discipline says, “How your souls prosper,” but nobody will be compelled to answer or scolded if they don’t. If you should say anything to start me may be I can say something in reply, but it will depend on you very largely; let us have plenty of room in this class for the Holy Spirit, and spells of silence to give him a chance.’

“For more than two years that class room was crowded. Old and young were at their ease, and to this day they who remain talk of the meetings as though they had been the ‘gates of heaven.’ After a little over two years he resigned, giving as a reason that he had told all he knew. His secret was self-effacement. When somebody would have a trial on hand, he’d sit still a moment, and then ask some good man or woman to give the right word. He’d rarely open or close the meeting himself. The result was a company of trained workers such as is not often found. Now and then I meet a man who says, ‘What a class leader he was.’”

Mr. E. K. Todd, long associated with John French as class leader, gives us a careful account of his spirit and methods in his class:

“John French, a class leader for nearly sixty years, forty years in Hanson Place Church, by the simplicity of his faith, the serenity of his trust, the consistency of his life, the keenness of his judgment, the goodness of his heart, his practical common sense, his knowledge of Scripture, and his loyalty to Methodism, fulfilled the conditions of a model class leader.

“His might be called ‘an old-fashioned class with the best modern improvements.’ He dearly loved to sing the old standard hymns of the Church, but he welcomed such of the new hymns as had a joyous air or a martial tread; and he conceded that the human voice, even in a class meeting, could be greatly aided by instrumental accompaniment.

“He was always at his class when able to attend. It is doubtful if in his sixty years of service he ever allowed a personal engagement, either business or social, to keep him from his place; though he conducted an extensive business, and his social engagements were many. He was always on time and urged his class members to be ever prompt in their attendance.

“His method of conducting his class seldom varied. He would sing a hymn while the members were gathering; then an opening hymn (all stand-

ing). Prayer would follow, either by himself or some member of the class. Then the Scripture lesson (generally the Friday reading in connection with the Sunday school lesson). He would briefly comment thereon, and then announce that the meeting was open for experience. He did not insist on everyone speaking, but in a quiet way he induced everyone to speak. He generally had some one on his immediate left on whom he could call to speak first; a quiet 'next' would draw forth a testimony from the next in line, and so on around the room.

"His responses were apt and helpful. If one spoke despondingly of his experience and deprecated his unfaithfulness, he would say, 'Do not write bitter things against yourself.' If one was critical or censorious, he would remind him that 'to err was human.' A text of Scripture, a verse of a familiar hymn, a kindly word of sympathy, a friendly admonition, or perhaps simply a fervent 'Amen' or 'God bless you,' would often prove just what was needed by the member giving the experience.

"He never scolded, seldom reproved (and then so gently that the reproof became a benediction), and his members always left the room feeling that 'it had been good to be there.'

"It was his custom, on going home, to sit down and recall the testimonies; and when absent he

loved to have his substitute report to him who was there and what was said.

"He was very careful as to probationers, and never recommended one unless he was satisfied as to the reality of his or her conversion.

"His smile was a benediction, his counsel a safe guide, his handshake a token of fellowship, his friendship an unspeakable boon. Those of us who knew him most intimately loved him most sincerely, and nowhere was he so approachable or so lovable (except in his home) as he was in that place he loved so well and attended so faithfully, his Friday night class meeting.

"God bless the memory of my dear old leader, John French."

✕ Warren Goodell was a class leader of the old school, as well he might be, for he was born in 1810 and died in 1902—a class leader for sixty years. Neither Carvosso nor Fletcher were oftener than he in the place of secret prayer. I might change the hyperbole of John concerning his Master and say, If the prayers uttered in that upper chamber were recorded, the chamber itself would not contain the books that should be written. For his living he manufactured shoes, for his *life* he walked and talked with God. His citizenship was in heaven, his pilgrimage upon earth. Perhaps he was too contemplative and introspective for a model class leader, but every Christian who knew him is thank-

ful that God gave the century one such man. His private life was as spotless as his profession. As boy and man I have known him for forty-five years, in daylight and darkness, in success and reverse, in sickness and in health, and I never found in his character a moral blemish. A just man he was, and one who feared God.

With such a character read and known by his neighbors it was worth while to see the people look into his face when he stood up in chapel and school-house to preach, for he was for fifty years a local preacher. It was worth a long tramp in the mud or snow to listen to his words of consolation and to see him lift the loads of the burdened.

As a leader he taught the lessons which were hardest for himself to learn. Naturally doubting, he was the apostle of faith. Like Wesley, he "preached faith until he had it and then preached it because he had it." He knew the misery of the lack of it, and tried to fortify every heart against unbelief. Merciless with himself, he was full of kindness for other people. The man who thought himself forgotten of God learned from his solicitude the tenderness of the great Father. He put himself out for other people. He visited them, carried their sorrows as if they were his own. Went out of his way to relieve them. Did things that nobody asked him to do. Result—respect, admiration, reverence, love. He outlived all the

friends of his early life, but their descendants revere him this day on two continents. If there are class meetings in heaven, I should like to be assigned to his class. I should expect to find there many old members who I am sure would choose their old leader. Among them I should find a mild, unselfish spirit who helped to make him what he was but who never took the credit. He was her husband and I was her son, but we both called her "Mother."

Rev. Willis P. Odell, D.D., pastor of Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church, New York, gives the following interesting account of a leader whom he does not name:

"The best class leader I ever knew was a young man whose heart was warm with love for Christ. He had the shepherding instinct. He saw the value of personal interest in souls and he gave himself with diligence and wisdom to the care of those assigned him. There was method in his management. He made the meetings intensely attractive by variety in the exercises. No two services were just alike. He brought freshly culled ideas from many fields of scientific, classical, and religious literature. An earnest devotional spirit was maintained without cant or dullness. The singing was always on a joyous key. Prayers and testimonies were brief. No one was permitted to lecture his classmates, and no one was encouraged to profess

superior sanctity. All absences were noted and large use made of the mail. Many letters were written weekly to stimulate those who showed signs of indifference. Numerous visits were made to the sick and the sorrowing. Shoe leather was liberally employed. Look-up committees were kept at work. Responsibility was laid on helpers. Special occasions were made much of. The social element was discreetly introduced. Human interest was awakened by wise appeals to sympathy. The class became a hive of industry. Often have I visited this model meeting when fifty or sixty were present. I have seen eighty in attendance. Of course it was a great power in the parish. With enough leaders of this kind any church can be kept in a high state of prosperity."

Dr. W. A. Quayle, pastor of Grand Avenue Church, Kansas City, outlines with masterly touch a nameless but model class leader:

"He was a boisterous man, full of faith and quaint originality. He had thoughts; which is a good symptom for a class leader or another. He was himself. He had no twin. He did nothing by rote. Things fairly spurted from his heart—like hot lava sometimes, like cool waters from deep fountains at other times. He was not, therefore, a man of routine. He kept topsails out for the heavenly winds, and seeing them blow he was glad and moved out in their direction. He

therefore killed no meeting with sameness. His was a fresh life like the smell of fields just before the dawn.

“His thoughts of God and his goodness and his book and his Son and the Holy Spirit were of singular vigor. He was such an Arminian as to do one’s heart good. He could not sing, but loved music. The tides often were at flood in his heart, and he shouted with a voice you could hear though you were far gone to deafness. He did not pet trials nor caress tribulations, but seemed to think class was for praising the Lord rather than for parading the devil. He was fervid but sane. He did not laud nor endure hobbies. He loved Christ and flamed up in holy ardor to call him blessed. He was voluble but not lengthy. He was homely in speech and warm in heart. He snugged up to folks and they snugged up to him. He believed in the new birth and loved his birthday and sang its praise in a joyful heart. He did not insist on everyone having exactly his experience nor always talk one thing, but talked that wide versatility of theme which is one essential glory of the book of God. He made class meetings possible and profitable. They were never stale while he was there. He never let them die out, but had good terminal facilities, thinking not that he must hold a class just so long, but must let it hold him so long as it was remunerative to those who were attendants. He kept a good

fire on the hearth and left while it was burning high.

"He had good fellowship with God's word, with God's people, with God's house, was scant in complaints at man or measures, waded out pretty deep in the sea of God but never beyond his depth. God loved him, and he knew it, and he saw visions and dreamed dreams. And he sees the King in his beauty."

Dr. S. F. Upham mentions the names of four class leaders whom he has known, whose work will bear inspection, and writes of them as follows:

"First, Dr. Augustus W. Smith, in my college days. President of Wesleyan University. He met the senior class, such as were Christians, regularly, it being a regular church "class." He was considerate, faithful, and understood young men and their peculiar temptations, and nowhere failed to emphasize the importance of character as a result of genuine faith in Christ. Dear man, little did he know the blessed influence he was exerting.

"Second, Dr. A. S. Hunt. He was tutor in the university during the first years of my college course. He not only met the 'class,' but made it his duty to visit the members in their rooms, talk and pray with them. He supplemented most excellent and instructive counsel at the regular 'class meeting' by faithful personal effort with indi-

viduals. Dr. Hunt, as you know, became one of our most distinguished ministers, but he was never greater than when he bowed in prayer with some poor discouraged young man and lifted him up.

“Third, Comfort Tiffany, father of Dr. O. H. Tiffany. Brother Tiffany was a class leader in the church in Bristol, R. I., when I was pastor there in 1862-3. He was a man of deep religious experience himself and built others up in an intelligent Christian life. He was a model Christian gentleman. He was to his class a constant example of gentleness, meekness, and charity.

“Fourth, C. W. Atwood, of Trinity Church, Springfield, Mass. The ‘class’ meets, as it has for thirty-eight years, at the leader’s home. Brother Atwood is an intelligent Christian; one who studies and imparts instruction. He believes the Bible from beginning to end and loves the Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart. His soul is on fire all the time, and he just lives for the good of others. No one has seen Springfield Methodism until he has visited Brother Atwood’s ‘North Main Street Class.’ ”

Rev. A. B. Leonard, D.D., writes thus of John Wilderson:

“The most helpful class leader I have ever known was not a class leader at the time I knew him, but a regularly licensed exhorter. Previously he had been a class leader for many years, was always at

the class meeting, and was usually called upon by our leader and conducted in whole or in part the class meeting exercises. His name was John Wilderson, whose residence was near Alliance, O. He was a member of the Lexington Society, an appointment at that time on the Alliance Circuit. At the time I knew him he was a farmer, although subsequently he became a miller. Brother Wilderson was of goodly stature, well proportioned, and of great physical strength. He was not an educated man, in the literary or scientific sense, but he had a large store of biblical and general information. He was a constant reader of the Bible, and his mind was stored with a large number of doctrinal, experimental, and practical texts, which he used with great skill and in response to testimonies of old and young. He was never at a loss for an appropriate passage from the word of God, words of instruction, encouragement, sympathy, or reproof, as circumstances required. His own experience was deep, and the current of his religious life was strong, often overflowing with ecstatic joy. Frequently, when giving counsel to the bereaved, suffering, sorely tempted, or wayward, his emotions would be deeply stirred and his eyes suffused with tears. His interest in and sympathy for young people was one of his strong characteristics. They turned to him for help in their time of need and were never disappointed. Few probationers

were lost to the church where he was their spiritual adviser. No class meeting was dull when he was the leader, and all went away with a sense of spiritual refreshing, and with renewed purpose to live a holy life. This man of God was present when the writer was converted, in 1855, and he owes to him a debt of gratitude for spiritual counsel and encouragement when struggling with what he then believed, and now has no reason to doubt, was a divine call to the Gospel ministry. Father Wilderson, as we afterward called him, lived to a good old age, died in peace, and now doubtless enjoys the reward of the faithful."

Rev. J. J. Reed, D.D., pastor of the Washington Square Methodist Episcopal Church, New York, kindly outlines for us the life and labors of two men well known to the Methodists of New York:

"Mr. John D. Slayback has for many years filled a large place in the eye of the Methodists of the New York metropolis. He was converted in the old Green Street Church when but a boy, was prominent in the activities of that church, and identified with the best interests of its Sunday school until about the year 1860, when the Washington Square Church was erected. Mr. Slayback was associated with the early promoters of the new enterprise, became a teacher and officer in its Sunday school, and after the retirement of Mr. W. W. Cornell became its Sunday school superintendent,

which position he has now held for more than thirty years. For much of that time he has been very prominent and greatly influential as a class leader. Notwithstanding the pressing cares of a prosperous business life and the duties incumbent upon him as Sunday school superintendent, trustee, and a member of two General Conferences, Mr. Slayback's devotion to all the interests of his weekly class has been for many years a matter of admiring comment.

"Living in the upper part of the city, his sleep-denying fidelity in attendance upon all the services of the church on the Sabbath and on week days has been most exemplary. He has been a unifying factor and force in the Washington Square Church life to a very remarkable degree. His peculiar gifts in public testimony, prayer, and song, added to a magnetic personality, are widely recognized in Methodist circles in New York city; but Mr. Slayback's life work has been largely limited to the development or conservation of all the best interests of the local church. There he is an acknowledged power. Large-hearted, liberal, and sympathetic to a degree, he is greatly beloved by hosts of those whom, in so many ways, he has been able to befriend.

"As a class leader he was singularly attractive. With a wide knowledge of human nature, a genuine love for spiritual life, an unquestioned

devotion to the Master whom so loyally he aims to 'trust and obey,' with an eye quick to see the humorous and the pathetic everywhere, even in church life, with a Christian experience that is deep, and a Christian testimony that is ready and real, Mr. Slayback has been a means of spiritual uplift and encouragement to hundreds who have looked to him for spiritual guidance in the class room.

"Mr. George E. Meyers, of the Washington Square Church, New York city, who died so suddenly and so greatly lamented a few years ago, was originally connected with the old Sullivan Street Church. He was associated with all the interests of Washington Square Church from the beginning of its history.

"He was a Bible class teacher for full sixty years. He was an honored and beloved class leader for an equal length of time. He died suddenly one Sunday afternoon, during the opening service, while seated in the Bible school. His funeral services were held—without design—on his Tuesday class night. The church that night was crowded to repletion. So unexpected was his death and so little known, indeed, that there were those of the wondering, weeping congregation who had come expecting that Brother Meyers would lead them in the weekly class as usual.

"Mr. Meyers was a man of fine appearance and

of attractive presence. His erect military bearing, even in advanced years, his bright, winsome speech, warm interest, and genial, gracious, brotherly greeting will never be forgotten by the multitude who during so many years came under the spell of his kindly influence.

"In the class room as a beloved and venerated leader he was an acknowledged social and spiritual power. Few men in Methodism have had a wider circle of acquaintance. Few men have been more painstaking in the exercise of a conciliating, fraternal watchcare over those confided to their spiritual instruction and guidance. His weekly class was very largely attended; his method of leading was most friendly, considerate, deferential, and sympathetic. He drew to him an almost reverent following of men and women. He was a veritable pillar in the church. His name to-day is 'as ointment poured forth.' He is greatly missed. His personality was so striking, so vital, and so familiar, he seems yet to belong to the class on which the benign semblance of his large photograph beams with a smile of encouragement from week to week."

There are few names more highly revered in Brooklyn Methodism than that of Moses F. Odell. Willis McDonald writes concerning him:

"He was a magnificent Christian man and official member of Sands Street Church and superin-

tendent of that Sunday school for twenty years. He was a member of Congress from Brooklyn during the war and one of the most loyal Americans this country ever produced. He was a war Democrat, but an intimate personal friend of President Lincoln, and a member of the Committee on the Conduct of the War.

“His was a beautiful Christian character, and it was nowhere more apparent than in his office as class leader. So devoted was he to the class that for years he left his duties in Washington early enough on Friday to reach his class in the evening, coming into it frequently in haste from the train, unable to secure food or rest before it. Our whole family were members of his class, and he has ever been my model class leader. There are many noble Christian men scattered through the churches of Brooklyn and of the entire country who are what they are under God because of the magnificent leadership of Moses F. Odell.

“His was a class for training in the deep things of God. Faithfulness and deep study of the Word of God were inculcated and exemplified. He was a joyous Christian himself and the meeting caught his spirit. He knew the great hymns of the Church, and taught us to love them. He was cheery and hopeful to the last degree. For him there were no trials or sorrows or difficulties of any sort which God was not able to conquer through faith.

“He loved the members of his class and was personally interested in them. The duties of a Congressman were never so great that he could not take time to talk with a man about the interests of his soul. He taught us by his example that we were to seek first the kingdom of God; that the greatest concern which any man had was with his Maker, and being right with God, he could not be out of joint with life.

“Scores of men to-day are perpetuating the life of Moses F. Odell, and his circle of influence was never wider than at this present moment.”

President Bashford, of Ohio Wesleyan University, writes as follows:

“I have known many good class leaders, but upon the whole I place J. P. Donnell, of dear old Chestnut Street Church, Portland, Maine, at the head of my list. Brother Donnell always had a large class, numbering between sixty and seventy members, with an average attendance of about sixty. In leading the class meeting he spoke very briefly at the opening of the service and very seldom responded with more than a single sentence to any experience narrated. His words were very few, but very weighty. The secret of his success was his intense personal love for each member of the class. He was a real shepherd of the flock. He knew each member by name and reflected much over his case, his testimony, his difficulties and pos-

sibilities. He saw personally those who failed to be present, evidently prayed for each member personally, and every sentence seemed to the members to come through Brother Donnell from the Lord.

"I ought to add that Brother Donnell's success was due largely to his wife. She was the very embodiment of Christian joy, sympathy, and sunshine. God gave them no children in their home, but to the seventy or eighty young people who gathered around them they were brother and sister, father and mother combined."

Dr. J. H. Chadwick, presiding elder of Brooklyn South District, describes one of Brooklyn's most successful class leaders.

"During my ministry I have known and been in close touch with many class leaders. Of course they have differed in many things, especially in their methods of conducting class meetings. Some of them have been eminent and have acquired great riches in this blessed work. I could mention names of some who are still alive and very popular, but I will content myself with giving the name of one who but recently passed to his heavenly home—Charles F. Jones, Sumner Avenue Church, Brooklyn, New York. I knew him well, having been his pastor for five years. He was devoted to all of the services of the Church—a gifted man intellectually, and of the highest Christian principles. At

least three things gave him high rank as a class leader:

1. He was a true Christian. No one doubted his piety. There was no cant, no affected manners about him. There was a vein of humor in his make up; still he was always dignified and Christlike in his bearing. By both speech and example he impressed all who knew him as being at once a Christian and a gentleman.

"2. By his careful preparations for and his versatile methods of leading the class he attracted many to its exercises. He studied selected passages and gave brief expositions of the Holy Bible, sometimes announcing the place a week in advance, so that his members could read and meditate on the lesson. All who heard him were instructed, comforted, and wonderfully helped by his apt, ready, and appropriate responses. He enjoyed and encouraged appropriate singing, although no singer himself. Under the leadership of this good man Christian life was enriched and character was symmetrically developed.

"3. His personal qualities were such as to render him very popular. He was extremely kind and attentive to all who attended his class. He was conscientiously regular and prompt. He gave the fullest latitude to human peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, but always kept the meeting well in hand. Such was his personal standing and influence

among his members that the usual sociability at the close of each meeting did not degenerate into mere gossip and a spirit of levity. The good of the class was not dissipated by subsequent worldly conversation.

"The church of which this man was a beloved member is richer and stronger to-day because of his love for and loyalty to the class of which he was for many years the honored leader."

For twenty-five years Daniel Van Nostrand has been the treasurer of Hanson Place Church, and few church treasurers have handled so much money as he. His answer to the usual question of the presiding elder each quarter has been, "All bills paid." If he ever had a "bad quarter of an hour," nobody ever knew it. For fifty years he has started for his place of business at three o'clock in the morning and has hardly known a day's sickness in all that time. His character is as beautiful as the sunlight, and everybody loves him.

This is the man who has one of the Sunday morning classes at Hanson Place Church. Come there at 9:30 and you will find him at his place. He has already been there half an hour, arranging his books and welcoming the early comers. The room is a marvel of neatness and taste. It was furnished throughout, frescoes, carpet and all, by a member of the class who thus offered to the leader a tribute of love. There are new hymnals and

Testaments, in large print, elegantly bound, in all the chairs.

The people are coming in. Here comes a man of superior intellectual furnishing, formerly a professor of mathematics in a great institution—later an actuary of a leading insurance company. Here comes a member of the New York Board of Education, a man of means, president, vice president, or director in many companies; one of the busiest of men. Here is a rising lawyer. There come a half dozen men of affairs—merchants, builders, and shopkeepers. Here are some boys who have just entered the class. You will hear them speak this morning. Here comes an old saint of God, her face fairly beaming; she was up at five o'clock this morning that she might talk with her Lord. She will have a message from him to-day. Here are godly mothers; some public school teachers; an old sailor or two; men and women toiling in humble ways, and half a dozen strangers who have heard of the class and are here for a blessing. At the organ is the widow of one of the famous members of the New York East Conference; she is like her leader and John Wesley in that she loves "swift singing." The hymn is given out:

"My God, the spring of all my joys,
The life of my delights,
The glory of my brightest days,
And comfort of my nights!"

An earnest prayer follows. The leader reads a Psalm; he speaks no more than five minutes—short, quick, explosive sentences. There is likely an “Amen” or two from the old sailor and the saint in the close-fitting bonnet. The field is cleared for action, and the firing begins. There are practical applications of Christianity from the hard-headed men of business; there is a posy or two from Brother Dayton’s corner. A smile from the leader draws out a passage of Scripture and a word of purpose from the boys. A long-winded stranger has come this morning. He means to tell the experiences of the last forty years. But after a moment Brother Nostrand says, “Be short, brother; we love each other here; no stealing of time,” and the brother leaves the last thirty-nine years untouched. There may be a word of criticism from the actuary or the printer, and an incisive question from the tea merchant, but the bank director knows how to harmonize differences and the class smiles to see him do it. The leader sums up in a few words; the pastor enforces some practical thought, and after a rousing hymn dismisses the class.

If you do not love the class meeting it is because you never went to Brother Van Nostrand’s class. Hanson Place has a score of such classes, each one having its distinctive feature and each leader worthy of more than passing note. It is no wonder that this is a class meeting church.

Dr. Hugh Johnston, of Baltimore, writes as follows:

“One of the finest classes in Methodism was conducted in Toronto, Canada, by the late William Gooderham, Esq. It was for business men, conducted by an eminently successful business man who was also earnest as a Christian, and who sought from week to week to broaden the outlook and deepen the spiritual life of his fellow-members.

“A very large and successful class meeting has been conducted in the Queen Street Methodist Church, Toronto, for more than a quarter of a century by Dr. W. W. Ogden, on the lines of experience and review of the wonderful life. Dr. Ogden has an immense practice and is one of the staff of the Toronto School of Medicine, but he allows nothing to interfere with the hour of his class. He makes much of the services, and his members feel the importance of regular attendance.

“J. McCormack, of Queen’s Avenue Church, London, Ontario, is another successful class leader. Dropping in upon his class about a year ago I found an attendance of over seventy, nearly all of whom took some part in the exercises. This class is highly organized. He has a secretary, uses the Bible much, appoints members of his class to take charge from week to week, and develops to the full the spiritual life of the class meeting.

"One of the most unique and interesting class meetings in American Methodism is the Strangers' Class of the Metropolitan Church, Washington, District of Columbia, led by Mr. T. W. Talmage. It meets after the Sunday morning service, and visitors from every part of America and Christians of all denominations are found in it. Mr. Talmage extends a personal invitation to the strangers that he meets. The church is well furnished with leaders and a goodly number of classes are found meeting weekly in that church.

"In First Church, Baltimore, the Veteran's Class conducted by the saintly Dr. Armstrong has been meeting continuously since the Lovely Lane Meeting House was built, something over one hundred and thirty years."

Rev. John P. Brushingham, D.D., pastor of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Chicago, gives us an interesting account of one of the leading class leaders of that city:

"John McKay has been in the true sense of the word a 'pillar' in the church. For the past twenty-five years he has been a class leader, a steward, and a Bible class teacher, on the west side of Chicago. He had not a college education, but he had a keen intellect, and has found time to read and study widely. He started out with the idea that he had nothing but himself to give the church, and he faithfully gave all. He married his wife

because he loved her, and has had nothing to regret. He has brought up and settled three children who are an honor to himself and to the church. He has always given more than his full share to the church funds. His hands have for many years toiled early and late in a great iron manufactory, and his face looks doubly bright and smiling where the iron dust flies thickest. The great army of fellow-workmen around him know it is a reflected glory from the face of the carpenter's Son. He has never known what it is to have a bank account, and people wonder at his serene faith, but he still keeps leaning on the strong arm of the living God.

"To describe him as a class leader one might first tell what he is not. He never grumbles. He is not a fault finder about the 'state of the church' and 'what it ought to be.' He has not reached the conclusion that the sermons are 'too long,' are 'too plain,' are 'too dry,' or that they do not '*draw*.' In fact he does not exhort at all in his class. Now as to what he is. He is both an old-fashioned man and an 'up-to-date' class leader. He is a staff of strength to every member of his class, from the pastor to the youngest child. If anyone comes to his class cast down with doubts he scatters them to the winds, and after hearing his quiet testimony such a one will wonder how he could ever have doubted.

"He has conversions in his class. He finds time

to call at the homes of his members. He makes his class room a trysting place where the 'children of the King' meet to confess, to shout, to rejoice, and to go forth strengthened for service. His pastor knows exactly where he stands, and his words of good cheer and comfort are like a benediction from heaven."

Mr. J. W. L. Foster, of Toronto, the celebrated artist, commissioned by the Methodists of Toronto to paint the portraits of John, Charles, and Susanna Wesley, and a prominent class leader, writes to the author concerning Canadian class leaders as follows:

"For first honor I select the name of Rev. Thomas W. Jeffrey. He was strong, original, erratic, and eminently spiritual as a preacher, and equally unique as a class leader. For the intimate personal talks of the class room he possessed that rare psychic gift by which the inner thought of his classmates was read. He interpreted to the timid ones their own half expressed feeling; to the discouraged wrestler with a nature warped by wrong habit he laid his finger upon the weakness but gave the hand and word of encouragement that were as magic. To thinkers entangled in many questions he brought the fine understanding of one who had dealt with the riddles himself—'had faced the specters of the mind and laid them.' The child and the aged saint alike felt the gentle wise cheer of

his life; but to the hypocrite he was like Nathan to David. This was Jeffrey in the street and in the home, and this was Jeffrey in the class room.

"His frequent habit was, after singing, to ask Brother A. or Sister B. to pray. Some line of the hymn or some petition offered would give him a theme for the meeting, and he would ask the petitioner if he had thought it out, or if he were prepared for the answer to his request, and some wholesome counsel about prayer would follow. One brother used to pray all around the world and, when out of breath, have a concluding word for the church at home. He was commended for the largeness of his heart and was asked a few definite questions about his fireside prayer with his wife and his boys. A visitor had given an unctuous speech with a floral ending, and the leader gave him a word of hearty welcome, asking at the same time, tactfully, a few questions about his conversion, his business, his daily habit, and present experience, to the effect that the inflation of manner collapsed as though pricked by a deft hand, and the true life of the man appeared.

"I don't forget having spoken of an experience of some years before, and with a twinkle he asked me where I was yesterday, and if I had had any special indication of divine nearness and favor this week. Once I complained that I did not find for myself the evidence of intimacy with God that

he seemed to have. He said: 'You may not, my brother.' Then he read text after text showing the divine interest and intimacy, until the class room seemed a Bethel, and all confessed it was the gateway of heaven.

"Mr. Jeffrey did not often expound Scripture to the class except to illustrate a truth or teach a lesson as the need was shown in the course of the class hour. Questions were encouraged and the hour was all too short for those who sat with this man of God. He was indeed one of the 'Drill-masters of Methodism.' "

Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, formerly pastor of the Metropolitan Temple, New York city, has kindly taken time from his vacation to send back from England the following appreciative testimony concerning "A Model Leader:"

"Some years ago the late Rev. Dr. R. W. Dale gave a memorable address before the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of Great Britain, held at Birmingham, England, in which address he, as the leading Congregationalist divine of his country, paid an eloquent and weighty tribute to the institution in whose interests Dr. Goodell has asked me to contribute this brief article.

"At the very time Dr. Dale uttered words every Christian minister could ponder to advantage, a model class meeting was being held, and had been continually sustained for many years, in a humble

mining village forty miles from Birmingham. It was only one of a hundred such organizations scattered through the 'Black Country,' but it was renowned for its leader, and through his agency infinite blessing was bestowed upon the community.

"William Owen was no ordinary man, but one 'full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.' He excelled in a remarkable gift of prayer, and often I have heard him pour forth his sanctified pleadings with such persuasiveness and power as to graciously subdue and hallow the assembly of the saints privileged to share in such a priesthood. Upon the godless and the wicked his petitions had a startling effect. Fearing God above many, he hesitated not to call sinners to repentance, and this by invocation and supplication which moved the hearts of men of all kinds.

"He was noted further for a close and accurate knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. They were his daily delight and his nightly meditation. No man I have known understood the genius of the book of God more explicitly than did this saint, this Methodist, upon whose path there ever shone the light of another world.

"He chose for the edifying of believers committed to his care not only the broad highways of the Bible, but also the less familiar and unfrequented paths where truths of rare beauty and heal-

ing virtue are to be found by the seeker. Sometimes the fruits of his constant study would leap forth and fasten upon conscience and will with an irremovable grip. The stale commonplace mediocrities of a self-centered introspection, which have ever been the dire foe of the class meeting, had no part or place where William Owen led the flock. Out of the most unpromising of them, the hesitant, the weak, the sinful, he would evoke new courage and strength and conscious acceptance with heaven. And he did these greater miracles because he was truly learned and devout, a lover of souls, a sagacious and ready interpreter of spiritual necessities. The last trait of his leadership was his mastery of the best hymns of the Church, and especially those which expounded the heights and depths of the evangelical movement of which universal Methodism is the permanent embodiment. Sweetness and light came into many a bitter lot while these lyrics fell from his lips. Sometimes I recall a stanza he was apt to quote, all too neglected now, and I find my own ministry greatly enriched by the knowledge he communicated to me in the earlier days. They are hymns which appeal to the strongest elements of worship, and they give an ease and facility to our expressions of the same which are to be reckoned as a primal force in propagating the faith, confirming the converts, and building up the saints.

“When you ask me for hints on a model class meeting, they personify themselves in this man, William Owen. He sleeps with God now, buried in full view of the tomb and the church of John Fletcher, of Madeley, and hence I speak of him with freedom. Some will say, Could he succeed in modern, in *American* religious conditions? I unhesitatingly answer, he could have succeeded anywhere. He was a spiritual expert, and adaptability was at his right hand. He loved those for whom he labored.

“Upon these generic lines, successful classes can be maintained. One of them, knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, read in the illumination of the Divine Spirit, is sufficient to sustain interest and afford profit. Two of them, made by the addition of the coveted gift of prayer, are secure; and the three are a cord that cannot be broken. If pastors have such men, or having them not, will train them, it seems beyond cavil to me that the class meeting can be, and surely it ought to be, the glory of Methodism and of the Church catholic. Its conscious or unconscious imitators have not improved upon the original. They sometimes lose the sense of individual responsibility by slipping behind the mass. And their general tone is not equal to the magnificent discipline of the classes I recall even not farther back than twenty years ago.

“Since the work of the lay preacher seems to be

thwarted in American Methodism, why not keep alive the fervor and democracy of the Church by sending chosen laborers into the harvest by means of this time-honored and most beneficial establishment."

XXVII

QUEEN VICTORIA AT A METHODIST CLASS MEETING.

THE *Methodist Times*, of London, under date of February 23, prints this very interesting story concerning the presence of the queen at a Methodist class meeting:

“Speaking at the anniversary of Lambeth Mission on Monday evening, Mr. J. A. Bowron, of Blackheath, related a remarkable incident, which, he said, had never been told in public before. ‘Many years ago,’ said he, ‘my father conducted a large society class at Sloane Terrace Chapel, Chelsea, and at one time one of the members of that class was a female servant at Buckingham Palace. This servant, however, came in for much persecution and ridicule on account of her Methodism and her regular attendance at class. It became so acute at length that some of the other servants threatened to leave if the Methodist servant remained, and the matter in some manner reached the ears of her majesty, who immediately inquired into it, and on being informed of the cause of the dissatisfaction, said, “I will go to the meeting myself and see if it is a fit place for a servant to go

to." And,' continued Mr. Bowron, 'her majesty came to my father's class, and on her return to the palace said to the persecuted Methodist servant, "Never forget your class meeting. I only wish that other servants would go also." ' ' "

Our *Christian Advocate* makes the following comment :

"It is to be regretted that some more particulars are not given, such as the date and other circumstances. If human nature was then what it is now, the presence of so great a personage—unless she went incognito—must have made a great change in the class. If indeed it was a true Wesleyan class, it must have given her majesty a view of the nature of the Methodist movement which she could never have obtained through the testimony of others."

The point which is especially worthy of notice is that Queen Victoria was sufficiently interested in the matter to make a personal investigation. That which convinced her we are certain would satisfy any honest investigator. A mistaken notion widely prevails that the class meeting is only for those who enjoy the subjective and the emotional in religion; that wide and accurate knowledge and broad training are incompatible with devotion to the class meeting. We answer, it all depends upon the class meeting. With the most of those with which we are acquainted the deeper one's knowledge of truth in any form the greater

will be the enjoyment. The shallow religiously and the thoughtless are most ready with flippant criticism. "Ben Karshook's Wisdom" may seem severe, but Browning taught a lesson which is not without its force in our time, and which some critics of the class may well ponder.

"Quoth a young Sadducee,
Reader of many rolls,
'Is it so certain we
Have, as they tell us, souls?'

"'Son, there is no reply!'
The rabbi bit his beard.
'Certain a soul have I;
We may have none,' he sneered.

"Thus Karshook, the Hiram's-Hammer,
The Right-hand Temple-column,
Taught babes in grace their grammar,
And struck the simple solemn."

If any who have criticised the class will follow the example of Queen Victoria we shall be quite ready to abide their verdict.

XXVIII

BIBLE CHAPTERS FOR THE LEADER

THE class leader should know where to find the following:

The Lord's Prayer. Matt. vi.

The Commandments. Exod. xx.

The Beatitudes. Matt. v.

Paul's Conversion. Acts ix.

Christ's Great Prayer. John xvii.

The Prodigal Son. Luke xv.

The Ten Virgins. Matt. xxv.

Parable of the Talents. Matt. xxv.

Abiding Chapter. John xv.

Resurrection Chapter. 1 Cor. xv.

Shepherd Chapter. John x.

The Comforter. John xiv.

Love Chapter. 1 Cor. xiii.

Tongue Chapter. James iii.

Armor Chapter. Eph. vi.

Paul's Prayer. Eph. iii, 14-21.

Traveler's Psalm. Psal. cxxi.

Bible Study Psalm. Psal. cxix.

Greatest Verse. John iii, 16.

Greatest Invitation. Rev. xxii, 17; Isa. lv, 1.

Rest Verse. Matt. xi, 28.

Consecration Verse. Rom. xii, 1.

Worker's Verse. 2 Tim. ii, 15.
 Another Worker's Verse. Psa. cxxvi, 6.
 How to be Saved. Acts xvi, 31.
 Should I Confess Christ. Rom. x, 9.
 Teacher's Verse. Dan. xii, 3.
 The Great Commission. Mark xvi, 15.
 Christ's Last Command. Acts i, 8.

CHOICE CHAPTERS

The story of Joseph. Gen. xxxi-1.
 The Ten Commandments. Exod. xx.
 Psalms i, xix, xxiii, xxxiv, xxxvii, li, ciii, cxvi,
 . cxxxix, cxlv.
 The cross. Isa. liii.
 The sermon on the mount. Matt. v-vii.
 The judgment. Matt. xxv.
 The birth of Christ. Luke i, ii.
 The prodigal son. Luke xv.
 The rich man and Lazarus. Luke xvi.
 The new birth. John iii.
 The water of life. John iv.
 The bread of life. John vi.
 The good shepherd. John x.
 The resurrection of Lazarus. John xi.
 The great revival. Acts ii.
 The Gospel in a chariot. Acts viii.
 The jailer in Lydia. Acts xvi.
 God's love to us. Rom. v.
 The greatest thing in the world. 1 Cor. xiii.

XXIX

A YEAR'S TOPICS

WE have already indicated many topics which the leader may present with propriety and profit. The following are noted as suggestive of the variety which should mark the themes presented and as offering a cumulative series covering the ground of Christian doctrine, practice, and experience. All references to Christmas, Easter, etc., are purposely omitted.

1. *The Sinfulness of Sin.* Neither guilt nor righteousness can be transmitted (Deut. xxiv, 16; Ezek. xviii, 20). Sin is personal demerit (1 John v, 17). Its results are certain (Eph. ii, 1, 5; Rom. vi, 23).

2. *How to Become Sons of God* (John i, 12; iii, 3-8; Rom. viii, 14-16; Gal. iii, 26; iv, 5; Rom. viii, 17; 1 John iii, 1-3). The sand under your feet has turned to rock. You have a strong and sure present standing place. Now you can say, "I am a son of God."—*Phillips Brooks*.

3. *The Bible is the Word of God.* Ten reasons to prove it: (1) The testimony of Jesus. (2) Its fulfilled prophecies. (3) Its unity. (4) Its superiority to any other book. (5) Its soundness

of doctrine. (6) Who accept and who reject it. (7) Its influence in uplifting men. (8) It is inexhaustible in its riches. (9) The better we are the more it is to us. (10) It has proven itself indestructible.—*Ellis*.

4. *Confessing Christ* (Rom. x, 10). Confession must follow believing. Neglecting to confess, we lose the witness of our acceptance. Christ confesses those who confess him. Our confession leads others to him.

5. *Bible Prescriptions for Human Ills*.

If you are "down with the blues," read the twenty-seventh Psalm.

If there is a chilly sensation about the heart, read the third chapter of Revelation.

If you do not know where to look for the month's rent, read the thirty-seventh Psalm.

If you feel lonesome and unprotected, read the ninety-first Psalm.

If you find yourself losing confidence in man, read the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians.

If people pelt you with hard words, read the fifteenth chapter of John.

If you get discouraged about your work, read the one hundred and twenty-seventh Psalm, and Gal. vi, 7-9.

If you are all out of sorts, read the twelfth chapter of Hebrews.—*Ellis*.

6. *What It Costs Not to Be a Christian* (Heb.

xi, 6; 1 Pet. i, 18; Mark viii, 36). The loss of abiding peace; the satisfaction of the soul-life; the companionship of holy thoughts; the promises of God; the hope of heaven.

7. *Family Devotions.* Set up a family altar, no matter how busy. "Prayer and provender hinder no man in his journey."—*Luther*. It is better to ask guidance in the morning than to ask forgiveness at night. Begin the day with prayer. Teach your children by example to seek first the kingdom of God. Have every member of the household present. Do not read a Psalm because it is short, nor repeat the Lord's Prayer to save time. The great need of our time is Christian life in the family. Urge it.

8. *How We Got Our English Bible.*

Read the prefaces of the Revised Old and New Testaments. Refer to cyclopedias under the titles Bible Versions, Luther, Reformation, Wyclif, Tyndale, Coverdale, Great Bible, Geneva Bible, Bishops' Bible, Douai Bible, Authorized Version, Revised Version.

9. *Faith.* What we gain by it. Never thirst (John vi, 35). Live (Rom. i, 17). Courage (2 Cor. iv, 13). Joy (Phil. i, 25). Overcome (Heb. xi, 33). Holy Spirit (John vii, 39). Stand (2 Cor. viii, 7). Good report and final triumph (Heb. xi). Faith is the soul of conduct; faith is the bloom, the breath, the vital power of religion;

without it virtue is the alabaster box, empty; faith is the precious ointment whose fragrance fills the house.—*Van Dyke*.

10. *A Night with the Question Box*. Give the members a chance to drop into a box, as they pass out, a paper bearing any question they would like to have the leader answer at the next meeting. It will give variety and furnish opportunity for some impersonal advice which will be very profitable.

11. *Prayer*. A Bible reading. The model prayer (Matt. vi, 9-13). Perseverance in prayer (Luke xviii, 1-8). Prayer and working (John xiv, 8-14). Bible study and prayer (John xv, 1-7). Obedience and prayer (John xv, 5-8; James v, 16). In His name (John xiv, 12-14; xv, 16; xvi, 23-27). Prayer and the will of God (Mark xiv, 32-37; 1 John v, 13-15). A life of prayer (1 Thess. v, 16-18; 1 Tim. ii, 1-4).

12. *The Christian Walk*. In newness of life (Rom. vi, 4). By faith (2 Cor. v, 6). In good works (Eph. ii, 10). In love (Eph. v, 2). In Christ (Col. ii, 6). Worthy of God (1 Thess. ii, 12). As Christ walked (1 John ii, 6). Worthy of vocation (Eph. iv, 1). In the Spirit (Gal. v, 16). In wisdom (Col. iv, 5). In the light (1 John i, 7).

13. *So-called Little Sins*. "An egg before an eagle, a thought before a thing." "A little time may be enough to hatch great mischief." What we

call little things are merely the causes of great things. One single black speck may be the beginning of a gangrene, of a storm, of a revolution.—*Amiel*. “Trifles are trifles only to triflers. Awake to the significance of the insignificant.”

14. *Difficulties in Coming to Christ*. There is too much to give up (Mark vii, 26; Rom. viii, 32; Luke xii, 16-21). Christians are not consistent (Rom. xiv, 12; ii, 1-5; Matt. vii, 1-5). I have tried before and failed (Isa. xl, 29-31; Psa. cxix, 11; 1 John v, 4).

15. *Keeping Out of Temptation* (Psa. i; Prov. iv, 14; ii, 20). It is useless to pray God to keep you in safety when you willfully walk into paths of danger. “How near could you drive to this cliff?” asked a lady of a coachman. “Within five feet,” was the answer. “How near could you?” she asked of the next. “Within two feet, if the ground is solid.” “Could you go nearer?” she asked of the third. “Madam,” he answered, “if I were driving your carriage I should keep as far away from the cliff as possible.” Do thou likewise. “The path of the wicked is dark, slippery, hard and thorny, crooked, lonely, dangerous, mean.”

16. *Be Patient* (James v, 7-11). Men of patience: Jesus (Isa. liii, 7-11); Abraham (Heb. vi, 15); John (Rev. i, 9); Paul (2 Tim. iii, 10). When to be patient (Prov. ix, 11; Gal. vi, 9; Rom. v, 3, 4; xii, 12; Prov. xiv, 29; xv, 1; xvi, 32).

17. *The Thought that Helped.* As each one comes into the room let him lay upon the desk a paper containing the quotation, poem, prayer, or text that has specially helped him this week. Comment upon these. You will also learn how wisely your class read.

18. *Church Attendance.* Without church attendance all the purposes of the church fail. No church, no Sabbath; no Sabbath, no safety—anarchy, revolution, ruin. Church attendance is not primarily to hear, but to worship; therefore do not neglect the church, whoever may be the preacher. An intelligent and spiritual observance of the Sabbath quickens every moral sense. Association with God's people is God's command (2 Kings xvii, 36; 1 Chron. xvi, 29; Psalms xxix; xcvi, 6; xcix, 5).

19. *Confessing our Sins* (1 John i, 9). Unless we realize our sins enough to call them by name it is hardly worth while to say anything about them at all. When we pray for forgiveness let us say "my temper," or "untruthfulness," or "pride," "my selfishness, cowardice, indolence, jealousy, revenge, impurity." To recognize our sins we must look them in the face and call them by their right names, however hard. Honesty in confession calls for definiteness in confession.—*M. D. Babcock.*

20. *Christian Conversation.* Some examples:

Jesus with Nicodemus (John iii); with the woman of Samaria (John iv, 7-27); on the way to Emmaus (Luke xxiv, 13). Peter with Cornelius (Acts x, 27). Festus and Agrippa (Acts xxvi, 31; Col. iv, 6).

21. *Falsehoods in Act and Word.* Sin has many tools, but a lie is a handle that fits them all.—*O. W. Holmes.*

Sincerity, I think, is better than grace.—*Carlyle.*

“Dare to be true; nothing can need a lie;
A fault which needs it most grows two thereby.”

22. *Jesus Only.* After the celebrated painter Da Vinci had completed his immortal painting of the Last Supper, a friend came in to inspect it. “That goblet is wonderful,” said the friend; “it stands out like solid silver.” The great artist drew his brush across the goblet, and exclaimed, “Nothing shall draw the eye of the beholder from my Lord.”

23. *A Night with the Psalms.* The Blessed Psalm, i. Messiah Psalms, xxii, xxiii, xxiv. Tonic Psalm, xxvii. Assurance Psalm, xxxvii. The “New” Psalm, xl. Faith’s Psalm, xlvi. The Saddest Psalm, lxxxviii. Safety Psalm, xci. Traveler’s Psalm, cxxi. Soul Winner’s Psalm, cxxvi. Psalms of Praise, cxlv-cl.

24. *The Uses of Affliction.* “Where grows the golden grain? Where faith? Where sympathy?”

In a furrow cut by pain." "Have you never had any clouds?" said a preacher to an old lady. "Clouds!" answered the old saint, "Why, yes. Where else would the blessed showers come from?" "Many a promise is written in sympathetic ink, which cannot be read until the fire of trouble brings out the characters."

25. *Meditation.* Think of good things. As a man thinketh in his heart, so he is (Psa. i, 2; xix, 14; lxxvii, 12; cvii, 43; cxix, 97; Josh. i, 8; Psa. v, 4; Prov. iv, 26; 1 Tim. iv, 15).

26. *Little Worries.* Christ saves from them (1 Pet. v, 7). Moses worried (Exod. iv, 10, 11). Elijah worried (1 Kings xix, 13-18). The widow worried (1 Kings xvii, 10-16). Paul did not worry (2 Cor. iv, 16, 17). A cure for worry (1 Sam. xxx, 6). Our little worries; what are they? How can we get rid of them? (Psa. cxxi, 1-8; John xiv, 1).—*Gospel Seed.*

27. *The Witness of the Spirit* (Rom. viii, 16; 1 Cor. ii, 11, 12). The mighty work of God which brings about the release from sin and the newness of life carries along with it its own proper and peculiar assurance to the human self-consciousness (John xv, 26; xvi, 13; Rom. xv, 16).—*Terry.*

28. *Missions and Money.* Over a thousand churches in each of the twelve leading denominations gave nothing last year for missions. The women of America spend more for kid gloves than

the Church spends for missions. The average gift of each church member is forty cents a year. Ten cents will preach the Gospel a day through native lips. A dollar will keep a boy in a mission day school for a year (Matt. ix, 36-38).—*Epworth Herald*.

29. *Some Ancient Heretics*. Read the story of Tauler and the Mystics. Curious it is to observe how these common-sense philosophers, men who brag chiefly of their irrefragable logic and keep watch and ward, as if this were their special trade, against mysticism and visionary theories, are themselves obliged to base their whole system on mysticism and a theory—on faith, in short, and that of a very comprehensive kind; the faith, namely, either that man's senses are themselves divine or that they afford not only an honest but a literal representation of the workings of some divinity.

30. *Growing in Grace* (2 Pet. i, 5-8). A good man is one who is growing better. "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?"

"O that I may grow!
What though time cuts its furrows in my face,
My heart may ever add grace unto grace,
Graces with added days keep pace.
O that I may grow."

31. *Possession Better than Profession*. An old Scotch minister proposed to keep back from the

Lord's table a young woman whose knowledge he found grievously neglected. Rising to go, she burst into tears. "It's true, sir, I canna' speak for Him, but I think I could die for Him." She was admitted.

32. *A Christian's Experience—Told by the Book.* What I *was* and what I *am*.

I once resided with 2 Tim. iii, 4, and walked in Eph. ii, 2, and conversed in Eph. ii, 3.

I heard one day that an inheritance had been purchased for me in 1 Pet. i, 4, by One residing in Heb. iv, 14, having paid an extraordinary price.

I called at 2 Tim. iii, 16, as my own prospects at Eph. ii, 2 were as bad as could be, and found a house at 2 Cor. v, 1.

The invitations to it put up by Isa. lv, 1, and John vii, 37, are especially attractive to the poor and needy.

At last I saw the only door at John x, 9.

My address will be 2 Cor. v, 1; but if you call any day at Heb. iv, 16, you will meet me and others. If you would call, attend to what the servant says at Luke xiv, 22.—*Gospel Seed*.

33. *The Tongue* (James iii, 2-10). Of all gossiping, religious gossiping is the worst; it adds hypocrisy to uncharitableness and effectually does the work of the devil in the name of the Lord. The leaders in every society may do much toward driving it from among the Methodists; let him in the

band or class observe: 1. Now we are to talk of no absent person, but simply of God and our own souls. 2. The rule of our conversation here is to be the rule of all our conversation.—*John Wesley*. A sure cure for gossip and slander is to breathe through your nose—keep your mouth shut. Be good enough to the air, good enough to people, to let all wickedness and malice remain inside of you. Germs of love, bacilli of brotherliness, will eat them up and you will be strong and beautiful and beloved.—*Babcock*.

34. *Temperance*. Need of temperance (1 Cor. ix, 25; Titus i, 8; ii, 2; Prov. xxi, 21; xxx, 4; Isa. xxviii, 1, 3, 7). Woes of drink (Prov. xxiii, 29-35). No stone should be left unturned to counteract the great curse of intemperance.

—*Dean Stanley*.

“Drink first dims, then darkens, then deadens, then damns.”

“Don’t let the *public house* live on your private house.”

“Some drink healths until they drink away their own health.”

35. *Saved for Service*. Get each member of the class to state what difficult personal work they are doing for Christ. If nothing specific is being done, get each to take up something at once. Impress each with the fact that he was saved that he might serve and bless others.

36. *A "Want" Meeting.* "Ask and ye shall receive." If your request for one thing could be granted, for what would you ask? Money? Business success? Knowledge? Health? None of these are absolutely necessary to happiness or success. What is necessary? Do you want it? Of what that God has offered do you feel most in need?

37. *The Sacrifice of Christ.* Redeems (1 Pet. i, 18). Procures forgiveness (Eph. i, 7). Brings peace (Col. i, 20). Cleansing (1 John i, 7). Justifies (Rom. v, 9). Sanctifies (Heb. xiii, 12). Overcomes (Rev. xii, 11). Gives access (Heb. x, 19).

38. *Amusements.* Are you for having as much cheerfulness as you can? So am I. Do you endeavor to keep alive your taste for all the truly innocent pleasures of life? So do I likewise. Do you refuse no pleasure but what is a hindrance to some greater good or has a tendency to some evil? It is my very rule, and I know no other by which a sincere, serviceable Christian can be guided.

—*John Wesley.*

39. *Obedience.* Men say that when they know they will do; Jesus says that when they do they will know. He does not promise to manifest himself to the man who dreams or debates, but to him who keeps his commandments. The seeds of truth sprout in the soil of obedience. The words of Jesus

in the mind of a disobedient man are no more vital than wheat in the wrappings of a mummy. To know the divinity of Jesus's teaching we must do his will with definite intention. Moral disobedience is mental darkness, but to submit our will in loyalty to his law is to open our minds to the light of his truth. God accepts obedience without emotion, but cannot accept emotion without obedience.

—*Babcock.*

Dictate no terms to Providence. At whatever cost, accept the service offered you, high or low, far or near, then burn to the socket.

—*Hitchcock.*

40. *Philip Findeth Nathanael.* Winning others to Christ. It was a great day for the Church when Andrew said to Simon Peter his brother, "We have found the Messiah," and brought him to Jesus. Personal solicitude has been one of the greatest factors in building up the Church. In the life of almost every great man it will be discovered that his greatness was largely due to the faithful warning or the noble example of some humble disciple whose soul possibly outranked in devotion to Christ that of their more gifted fellow. Bishop Newman used to say that it was the call of a friend, "God wants you," thrice repeated that led him to Christ.

41. *The Hymns of Charles Wesley.* Look for them in the Hymnal. Get Nutter's *Hymn Studies*

if possible. If not, take each hymn and find the Scripture upon which each line is based. Thus the text for "Jesus, Lover of my soul" would be, "Who loved me and gave himself for me!" Give a sketch of Wesley.

42. *Enduring Injuries.* We are constantly liable to ill treatment. Much we bring on ourselves; much may be undeserved. We are apt to retaliate, not only when great wrong is done us, but in the trifling events of daily life. Totally different was the conduct of Jesus. Throughout his life he was despised and rejected of men, yet he went about doing good.—*Newman Hall.* (1 Pet. ii, 18-25; Col. iii, 12-14; 1 Pet. iii, 9; Eph. iv, 31, 32.)

43. *Good Company.* Associate with men of good judgment. Bad company is the devil's net. You are known by the company you keep. Seek for companions those who will instruct and inspire you. The best of a college course is the men you meet; they will influence you when you have forgotten the teaching of the books. If you go with those who do not love your Christ you must soon leave them or him (Prov. i, 10; ii, 12; xiv, 14; xii, 11; Rom. i, 32; 1 Cor. v, 9; xv, 33; Eph. v, 7).

44. *Goodness and Usefulness.* Goodness conditions usefulness. A grimy hand may do a gracious deed, but a bad heart cannot. What a man says

and what a man is must stand together, must *consist*. His life can ruin his lips, or fill them with power. It is what men see that gives value to what we say. Paul had the right order: "Take heed unto *thyself* and unto the doctrine." Being comes before saying or doing. Well may we say, "Search me, O God. Reveal me to myself. Cleanse me from secret faults, that those who are acquainted with me, who know my downsittings and uprisings, may not see in me the evil way that giveth the lie to my words."—*Babcock*.

45. *The Duty for To-day*. Take time by the forelock. By losing present time we lose all time. "I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good thing, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to my fellow-creatures, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again." "Work when you have your tools; the hour cometh when you may not have them."

46. *The Holy Spirit*. Wisdom (Exod. xxviii, 3). Understanding (Isa. xi, 2). Truth (John xiv, 17). Adoption (Rom. viii, 15). Grace (Zech. xii, 10). Power, love, and grace (Heb. x, 29; 2 Thess. ii, 13; 1 Pet. i, 2).

47. *The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax* (Matt. xii, 20). God's providences are arranged to support the weak, and not to crush them. His breath will fan the feeble light until it breaks into

a flame. He is not anxious to mark our transgressions, but he loves us like a father. Keep good heart. The God of the sparrow and the lily, of the bruised reed and smoking flax, is your Father.

48. *The Lord's Supper* (1 Cor. xi, 23-32). Cup of salvation (Matt. xxvii, 27, 28). Cup of blessing (1 Cor. x, 16). Cup of thanksgiving (Luke xxii, 17). Cup of communion (Matt. xxvi, 27; Mark xiv, 23). Cup of testimony (1 Cor. xi, 26). Cup of expectation (Matt. xxvi, 29).

49. *Holiness* (Rom. vi, 19; 1 Pet. ii, 11; 1 Thess. iv, 3-7; ii, 10; 2 Cor. vii, 1; Eph. iv, 24; i, 4). All these scriptures imply a thorough cleansing from the old, sinful life and the attainment of a state of personal purity. A holy life is impossible apart from a righteous life, and it is important that our conception of righteousness be accurate and exalted.—*Terry*.

50. *The Heavenly Home*. A beautiful place. A safe place. A happy place. A permanent place. The home of childhood, of all the holy and the pure. The land of health and joy, of plenty and peace. That our heavenly home will satisfy our fullest social longings we cannot doubt. No one need to complain of lack of good society there. Old Dr. Emmons is not the only Christian who has fed his hopes of "a good talk with the apostle Paul." Dr. Guthrie is not the only parent who has felt assured that "his little Johnnie would meet him

inside the gate." Many a pastor expects to find his converted flock as a "crown of rejoicing to him in that day."—*Cuyler*.

51. *Eternal Life* (John iii, 15; i, 4; vi, 54; xvii, 3; Col. iii, 10; 1 Tim. vi, 12). Eternal life, then, is to be understood primarily of the pure, free, permanent, and ever-increasing spiritual life of Christlikeness. It is a present possession and glorious reality to the believer. The life in Christ is eternal in that it endures in eternal permanence.—*Terry*. It also indicates an entrance into the joy and glory of the King himself.

52. *What is a Class Meeting?* The Christian's opportunity to help his brother by telling how God has helped him.

- (1) It is a school where all come to learn.
- (2) It makes people think.
- (3) It spreads knowledge.
- (4) It leads to prayer.
- (5) It develops spiritual strength.
- (6) It develops Christian brotherhood, and gives us a special interest in others.
- (7) It is a great social leveler.
- (8) It is a church builder, because it develops a working agency.
- (9) It is a complete system of church shepherding.
- (10) It is the church's barometer.

(11) It is what the heating apparatus is to a building.

(12) It is a spiritual gymnasium.

(13) It is an experimental station in the Christian life.

(14) It is a tower of observation for the pastor.

(15) Here spiritual travelers compare notes and gain information concerning the way they are going.

We go to class meeting—

For a reverent talk about Christ.

For a self-forgetting talk with Christ.

For an honest talk about how we may do our best work for Christ.

Serious members love it.

Indifferent members need it.

These three factors will always start an experience.—*Exchange.*

To present these topics well, remember Dr. Guthrie's advice: "Prove, that is, appeal to the Reason. Paint, that is, appeal to the Imagination. Persuade, that is, appeal to the Affections."

The leader should try to be "Conciliatory, but not servile; winning, but not fawning; timely, but not time-serving; simple, but not commonplace; interesting, but not sensational; positive, but not dogmatic; tender and affectionate, but not lachrymose and sentimental; orderly, but not mechanical. Workers, note this. Spiritual plowman,

sharpen thy plowshare with the Spirit! Spiritual sower, steep thy seed in prayer; so shall it germinate. Spiritual warrior, whet thy sword with the Spirit, and ask the Spirit whose word is a sword indeed to strengthen thine arm to wield it."—*Ellis*.

XXX

GREAT THOUGHTS FOR CLOSET AND CLASS

HE who climbs above the cares of this world and turns his face to his God has found the sunny side of life.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

Faith is the grave of care.—*Krummacher.*

Those must needs be well kept that have the Lord for their keeper.—*Matthew Henry.*

God is not a workman that will need to be ashamed. He hath called together a goodly company of the nobility of heaven to look on while he brings a holy creature out of your unholy nature. Will he lay down his implements and say, "I miscalculated"?—*George Bowen.*

O God, who alone canst transform the nature of man, change the ingenuity wherewith I invent worries into a skill at discovering joys. Make strong my memory for pleasure and weaken it for pain. Give me a genius for gratitude.

—*A. R. Wells.*

Is there anything that pleases you more than to be trusted—to have even a little child look up into your face and put out its hand to meet yours and come to you confidingly? By so much as God is

better than you, by so much more does he love to be trusted.—*Henry Van Dyke.*

We must know before we can love. In order to know God we must often think of him.—*Lawrence.*

It is the deliberate verdict of the Lord Jesus that it is better not to live than not to love.

—*Henry Drummond.*

If at the last judgment God should accuse me of being too stern and pitiless, I should have nothing to answer him; but if he should charge me with too great leniency and pity, I can always say I have learnt mercy of him whose mercies are infinite.

—*Bernard of Asti.*

Judge thyself with a judgment of sincerity and thou wilt judge others with a judgment of charity.

—*John Mason.*

Epictetus says, "Everything hath two handles." The art of taking things by the better side, which charity always doeth, would save much of those janglings and heart burnings that so abound in the world.—*Robert Leighton.*

Without a friend thou canst not well live: and if Jesus be not above all friends to thee thou shalt be indeed sad and desolate.—*Thomas à Kempis* (quoted in *Closet and Altar*).

Home Sundays, when the peace of God abides in loving hearts, are nearer heaven than anything else earth can show.—*Closet and Altar.*

Pray and read, and read and pray, for a little from God is better than a great deal from men.

—*John Bunyan.*

Pray ye; go ye; bring ye—a call to supplication, service, sacrifice.—*L. D. Wishard.*

If any work is really God's giving, and he puts it either into our hearts to devise or into the power of our hands to do, no fear but he will also provide stuff sufficient, whether metal or mental.

—*F. R. Havergal.*

Man is more blessed or less blessed in the same measure that he is aware of the presence of God.

—*Tauler.*

Many indeed think of being happy with God in heaven, but the being happy with God on earth never enters their thoughts.—*John Wesley.*

A man could not become happy by making himself anything, but he may by letting God make him something.—*Charles Kingsley.*

The kingdom of heaven is not come even when God's will is our law; it is come when God's will is our will.—*George MacDonald.*

Our Lord God doeth like a printer, who setteth the letters backward; we see and feel well his setting, but we shall read the print yonder in the life to come.—*Martin Luther.*

The world sees the crosses of Christians but not their anointings.—*St. Bernard.*

God has made us to feel, that we may go on to act. If then we allow our feelings to be excited without acting from them we do mischief to the moral system within us.—*J. H. Newman.*

Some people do not like to hear much of repentance; but I think it is so necessary that if I should die in the pulpit I would desire to die preaching repentance, and if out of the pulpit I would desire to die practicing it.—*Matthew Henry.*

Love is the only atmosphere in which God can reveal himself. Love alone has eyes to see God, and ears to hear him. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love."—*Mark Guy Pearse.*

It is a deep true thought which the old masters had when they drew John as likeliest to his Lord. Love makes us like.—*Alexander Maclaren.*

Christ's incarnation was a girding himself to go after his lost sheep.—*Trench.*

Has the water of life become a well within you? Is it living water—a ceaseless, stainless spring? Does it nourish thy soul and its overflowing make the world to rejoice? Then know that living water is Christ within thee—it is eternal life already begun.—*Goodell.*

I should be sorely afraid to live my life without God's presence; but to feel that he is by my side now just as much as you are, that is the very joy of my heart.—*Alfred Tennyson.*

With God go even over the sea ; without him not over the threshold.—*Russian Proverb.*

Thou hast lighted my soul, make me more happy in giving light to others than in receiving it unto myself.—*Bishop Hall.*

“The life of Christianity,” said Luther, “consists in possessive pronouns. It is one thing to say Christ is a saviour, it is quite another thing to say he is my Saviour and my Lord.”—*J. C. Ryle.*

Do not let the good things of life rob you of the best things. Goodness outranks goods. A bursting barn and a godless heart proclaim a fool without hope. Life is more than meat and the body than raiment, and a soul outweighs the world. So character must come before comforts and God before bread.—*Maltbie D. Babcock.*

There is more cause for joy than for complaint in the hard and disagreeable circumstances of life. Browning said, “I count life just a stuff to try the soul’s strength on.” Spell the word discipline with a final g—“discipling.” We are here to learn Time’s lesson for Eternity’s business.

—*Babcock.*

Would to God that all the party names and unscriptural phrases and forms which have divided the Christian world were forgot, and that we might all agree to sit down together as humble loving disciples at the feet of one common Master, to hear

his word, to imbibe his Spirit, and to transcribe his life in our own.—*John Wesley.*

Give me solid and substantial religion; give me an humble, gentle lover of God and man; a man full of mercy and good fruits without partiality and without hypocrisy; a man laying himself out in his work of faith, the patience of hope, the labor of love. Let my soul be with these Christians wheresoever they are and whatsoever opinion they are of.—*John Wesley, Advice to the People called Methodists.*

XXXI

THE TESTIMONY OF GREAT MEN

CHRIST

IN all my study of the ancient times I have always felt the want of something, and it was not until I knew my Lord that all was clear to me. With him there is nothing that I am not able to solve.—*Johann v. Müller.*

I know men, and Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founder of empires and the gods of other religions; that resemblance does not exist. There is between Christ and all other religions whatsoever a distance of infinity from the first day to the last. He is the same, always the same, majestic and simple, infinitely firm and infinitely gentle.—*Napoleon.*

The best of men

That ere wore earth about him, was a sufferer;

A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit;

The first true gentleman that ever breathed.

—*Decker.*

To deny divinity to Christ is to relegate all divinity whatsoever to a far-off shadowy realm of

metaphysical inquiry. If the flesh and blood of the man whose meat it was to do the will of God be not divine, then the days of faith in a living God are numbered, and the feet of the agnostic are at the door to carry out the corpse.—*W. D. Hyde.*

All that I think, all that I hope, all that I write, all that I live for, are based upon the divinity of Jesus Christ, the central joy of my poor wayward heart.—*Gladstone.*

The wildest dreams of her rabbis has been far exhausted; has not Jesus Christ conquered Europe and changed its name to Christendom. All countries that refuse the cross, wilt; and the time will come when the countless myriads of America and Australia will find music in the songs of Zion and solace in the parable of Galilee.—*E. D'Israeli.*

Look on our divinest symbol, on Jesus of Nazareth, and his life and biography, and what follows therefrom. Higher has the human thought not yet reached.—*Carlyle.*

Nothing will do except righteousness, and no other conception of righteousness will do except Christ's conception of it.—*Matthew Arnold.*

I would rather have one smile from Christ than to have the acclamations of the world.—*Beecher.*

My belief embraces the divinity of Christ and a recognition of Christianity as the mightiest factor in the world's civilization.—*William McKinley.*

The history of the life of Christ as concerning him should be the holiest among the mighty and the mightiest among the holy—life that has burst new empires off their hinges and turned the stream of centuries out of its channel and still governs the ages.—*Richter*.

THE BIBLE

All that I have taught of art, everything that I have written, whatever greatness there has been in any thought of mine, whatever I have done in my life, has simply been due to the fact that when I was a child my mother daily read with me a part of the Bible, and daily made me learn part of it by heart.—*Ruskin*.

I want to know one thing, the way to heaven, how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way, he has written it down in a book. O, give me that book, give me the book of God. I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one book.

—*Wesley*.

To the covenants of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future.

—*Ulysses S. Grant*.

I have for many years made it a practice to read through the Bible once a year. It is an invaluable and inexhaustible mine of knowledge and virtue.

—*John Quincy Adams*.

From the time that at my mother's feet or at my father's knee I first learned to lisp phrases from sacred writings, they have been my daily study and vigilant contemplation. If there be anything in my style or thoughts to be recommended, the credit is due to my kind parents in instilling into my mind an early love of the Scriptures.—*Webster*.

Take away our Bible from us and our warfare against intemperance, impurity, oppression, infidelity, and crime is at an end. We have no authority to speak or courage to act.

—*William Lloyd Garrison*.

Save for my daily range
Among the present fields of holy writ
I might despair.—*Tennyson*.

The man of one book is always formidable, but when that book is the Bible he is irresistible.

—*William M. Taylor*.

IMMORTALITY

Though I stoop into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time.

I press God's lamp close to my breast ;
Its splendor soon or late will pierce the gloom,
I shall emerge somewhere.—*Browning*.

There can no evil befall a good man, whether he be alive or dead.—*Socrates*.

Man's immortality stands fast upon the fact of the possession of the image of God, and the true conception of good places the worth of the man so high, and God's will of love for communion with him so fine, that immortality has therein its pledge.

—*Dorner.*

The expectation of something beyond is in all breasts. Man has everywhere believed in all ages and almost without exception that man is immortal.—*Johnson.*

Without a belief in personal immortality religion is like an arch resting on one pillar, like a bridge ending in an abyss.—*Max Müller.*

If death ends life, what is this world but an ever-yawning grave in which God buries his children with hopeless sorrow.—*Munger.*

XXXII

EPISCOPAL ADDRESS TO CLASS LEADERS

DEAR BRETHREN: The General Conference of 1888 requested the bishops to prepare a course of reading for class leaders, and to issue an address to them concerning their office. That request was made in the following terms:

"Whereas, The Discipline in Part 1, chapter iii, paragraph 62, provides for a course of study for the class leaders, but does not specify or give particular directions as to the course of study; therefore,

"Resolved, 1. That we request the bishops to prepare a suitable course of reading for the class leaders of the Church and cause the same to be printed in the Discipline.

"2. That we request the bishops to prepare an episcopal address to class leaders, such as will serve as an introduction to the course of reading, and will, at the same time, be an affectionate reminder of the gravity and responsibility of the class leader's office. We further request that this address be printed in tract form, and that it be made one of the text-books in the course of reading."

In fulfilling this request we desire first of all to fasten your thoughts on

THE NATURE OF THE CLASS LEADER'S OFFICE.

No brief term better describes it than that by which it was designated in the Episcopal Address to the General Conference of 1860; namely, a "subpastorate."

From the beginning Methodism has been intent on faithful dealing with individual souls, believing that only thus could it fulfill its divinely-appointed mission, which John and Charles Wesley declared to be "to raise up a holy people." They plainly saw that they must follow the example of the Great Teacher, who not only publicly proclaimed the truth, but also privately applied it to the individual conscience, as in the case of Peter, the woman at the well, and many others; and of Paul, who taught the people "from house to house," and "warned everyone night and day with tears." They saw that no amount of public preaching, however orthodox and zealous, could fully accomplish the end in view. They were interested in securing not merely the conviction of sinners and their public profession of faith in Christ, but also their actual conversion, attested by the witness of the Spirit, and the subsequent training of them in Christian knowledge and holiness.

What Mr. Wesley thought of this hand-to-hand

work you may learn from his own words in the Minutes of the Wesleyan Conference: "Great as this labor of private instruction is, it is absolutely necessary; for after all our preaching, many of our people are almost as ignorant as if they had never heard the Gospel. I speak as plainly as I can, yet I frequently meet with those who have been my hearers for many years, who know not whether Christ be God or man. And how few are there that know the nature of repentance, faith, and holiness! Most of them have a sort of confidence that God will save them, while the world has their hearts." He adds: "I have found by experience that one of these has learned more from one hour's close discourse than ten years' public preaching." From the beginning our Discipline has contained a most searching and arousing chapter on Pastoral Visiting which abounds in trumpet-blasts like this: "What avails public preaching alone, though we could preach like angels? We must, yea, every traveling preacher must instruct the people from house to house. Till this be done, and that in good earnest, Methodists will be no better." (See Discipline, ¶ 140.)

If, however, all ministers were as zealous as this most salutary exhortation summons them to be in prosecuting this part of their work, the urgency of their public duties and of other legitimate demands upon their time would render it simply impossible

for many of them to do a tithe of the individual work needed. Especially is this true in the case of an itinerant ministry like ours. Mr. Wesley quickly found himself and his associate pastors utterly overwhelmed in such endeavors, and was providentially led to organize class meetings. The primary purpose of these meetings was to collect the necessary "penny a week" from each member, but they quickly took on a far deeper and richer aim. In his *Journal* for March 25, 1742, Mr. Wesley says: "I appointed several earnest and sensible men to meet me, to whom I showed the great difficulty I had long found of knowing the people who desired to be under my care. After much discourse, they all agreed there could be no better way to come to a sure, thorough knowledge of each person than to divide them into classes, like those at Bristol, under the inspection of those in whom I could most confide. This was the origin of our classes at London, for which I can never sufficiently praise God; the unspeakable usefulness of the institution having ever since been more and more manifest."

We would thus fasten your earnest attention on the indispensable necessity of individual effort to secure the actual conversion of awakened persons, the reclamation of the backslidden, the instruction of the ignorant, and the training of each believer in the practical duties of a holy life; and also on

the absolute impossibility of the full accomplishment of this work by ministers alone.

Hence the vast importance of the "subpastorate," we would almost say the copastorate, to which you are called. Bishops Coke and Asbury in their Notes on the Discipline (published by request of the General Conference in the Discipline of 1787) give their deliberate judgment in these emphatic words:

"The revival of the work of God does perhaps depend as much upon the whole body of the leaders as it does upon the whole body of the preachers." "Our leaders, under God, are the sinews of our society, and our revivals will ever, in a great measure, rise or fall with them." "In short, we can truly say that through the grace of God our classes form the pillars of our work, and, as we have before observed, are in a considerable degree our universities for the ministry."

Such was the estimate of the class meeting made by the first bishops of American Methodism more than a century ago. Whenever, in any country, in all the years from then till now, class meetings have been faithfully sustained and wisely conducted that early estimate has been fully justified. They have fanned many a spark of grace into flame, have led many a timid seeker into the triumphant knowledge of a present salvation, have reclaimed the backslidden, comforted mourners,

established the wavering, developed budding talent, and led thousands of the noblest sons of the Church into the ministry.

We cannot, therefore, look upon the decline of class meetings without profound concern.

In alluding to this topic we take pleasure, however, in assuring you that the extent of this decline has sometimes been greatly exaggerated, and that in many places class meetings are numerous and largely attended and in a most encouraging degree maintain their old-time power and usefulness; in some churches a large majority of the members being frequent attendants. This remark applies to no particular class of churches, but is true among some of our poorest people and some of our wealthiest; and in city, village, and country churches.

Yet we sadly admit that no such proportion of our people are regular class goers as formerly, and that in some places class meetings have entirely died out or have been displaced by other forms of service, which cannot accomplish the purposes in view. To this fact, in large part, we attribute the increase in the number of unspiritual church members, the presence of worldliness in the church, and the lack of more numerous, searching, and sweeping revivals. We do not forget that circumstances change, and that the incidental phenomena of religious awakening and reformations may be ex-

pected to differ from age to age; but it seems to us certain that if the great mass of the members of all our churches should meet once a week in class meetings under competent leaders, who should, as the Discipline directs, "1. Inquire how their souls prosper; 2. Advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as the occasion may require," the essential glory of early Methodism would burst forth anew on every hand; and awe-struck communities would be constrained to say, "Surely the Lord hath visited his people."

The necessity for class meetings, or for some similar means of grace, is deeply embedded in human nature. The social principle must have exercise in religious matters. All evangelical Christians, in times of religious quickening, feel this; and various means of grace akin to the class meeting have been devised to meet this deep-seated want: such as "inquiry meetings," "conference meetings," "young converts' meetings," and "experience meetings." In the class meeting we have and have always had the very meeting which can best secure all the ends thus sought; and we look to our class leaders to restore it to far more than its old-time power.

We submit the following

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

- I. To our pastors, who appoint the leaders and who should themselves be model leaders;

1. Have at least one class meeting in every church, however small. If necessary, lead it yourself. If you can find no other convenient time, hold it after the Sunday morning service, and if need be, shorten your sermon to make room for it.

2. Preach occasionally on class meetings, and give notice of them every Sunday.

3. Assign all the members to classes, being careful to consult their convenience as to time.

4. Change the leaders when necessary, appointing some women when that seems best, especially for young people's and children's classes.

II. To class leaders:

1. Your office demands a life of high consecration to God. The church has a right to expect of you a life marked by conspicuous moral purity and religious zeal. Be holy. Be zealous. Be an example of earnest and constant devotion to all good works.

2. Be absolutely regular and prompt in attending your class meeting. Always begin it and close it on time.

3. Make it interesting and instructive. These are the two indispensable requisites for a good class meeting. In order to do this you must be a constant student of the word of God and of religious books and periodicals. By all means take at least one of our church papers. Your mind and heart must thus be constantly made fresh and full.

Keep out of the ruts. Avoid platitudes. Make the meeting largely conversational. Do not require everyone to speak, nor always reply to everyone. Introduce topics of experimental and practical godliness in a free conversational way, asking questions and drawing out replies. Vary the meeting by sometimes asking each member to quote a verse of Scripture, or of a hymn, indicating his personal experience. If your class members are interested and helped they will come again, and regularly.

4. Be a constant student and teacher of the word of God. Saturate your mind and heart with it. Read, study, and search it daily. Commit to memory texts suited to all varieties and stages of religious experience and temptation. Quote them discriminatingly and believingly. In his duel with Satan our Lord conquered every time simply by quoting Scripture.

5. As to the course of reading prescribed, you will find that the books recommended to you are adapted to the quickening of your personal religious life; to the increasing of your religious knowledge, and of your preparation for your work as leaders; and to impressing upon your minds the nature and history of the class meeting and the best methods to make it greatly successful in training souls for God's work on earth and for his glory in heaven. We earnestly advise you to get all these books, and to read and study them with conscien-

tious fidelity, as your time may permit. It will be well for you to read some of them repeatedly, to call the attention of your children to them, and to lend them to your neighbors. Others you will need to keep at hand for frequent reference.

XXXIII

COURSE OF READING FOR CLASS LEADERS

Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church.
1896.

The Catechism, No. 3.

Episcopal Address to Class Leaders.

The Class Leader. *Atkinson.*

The Class Meeting. *Fitzgerald.*

The Why of Methodism. *Dorchester.*

Helps to Official Members. *Porter.*

Plain Account of Christian Perfection. *Wesley.*

Doctrinal Aspects of Christian Experience. *Merrill.*

Father Reeves.

Memoir of Carvosso.

Handbook of Christian Theology. *Field.*

Seed Thought. *Robinson.*

Scripture History (abridged edition). *Smith.*

Outlines of Church History. *Hurst.*

History of Methodism (abridged edition). *Stevens.*

Books of Reference:

Handbook of Bible Geography. *Whitney.*

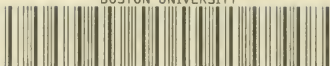
Handbook of Bible Manners and Customs.
Freeman.

Handbook of Bible Biography. *Barnes.*

OTHER BOOKS RECOMMENDED

- Daniel Quorm and His Religious Notions. *Pearse.*
 The King's Son. *A Memoir of Billy Bray.*
 The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life.
 Guides and Guards in Character Building. *Payne.*
 Personal Work. *S. M. Sayford.*
 Lectures to my Students. *C. H. Spurgeon.*
 Teaching and Teachers. *H. Clay Trumbull.*
 The Point of Contact. *De Bois.*
 Modern Methods in Church Work. *Mead.*
 The Spiritual Life. *George A. Coe.*
 The Blessed Life. *Quayle.*
 With Christ in the School of Prayer. *Andrew
 Murray.*
 A Year's Prayer Meeting Talks. *Banks.*
 Newly Enlisted. *Theodore Cuyler.*

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